YOUTH EXPLOSION IN DEVELOPING WORLD CITIES

APPROACHES TO REDUCING POVERTY AND CONFLICT IN AN URBAN AGE

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Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Comparative Urban Studies Project

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Cover Photograph: Street-juggling to earn money at a busy intersection in Puebla City, Mexico.
Photo by Marcus Lyon, working together with JUCONI Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

By Joseph S. Tulchin and Diana H. Varat
with Lisa M. Hanley

The growth of cities at extraordinary rates together with the demographic distribution in most developing countries has contributed significantly to the present youth explosion in urban areas. It has been estimated that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cites by 2030 and that as many as 60 percent of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. Almost all of this growth will occur in developing world cities, where already 30 percent of the population lives below official poverty lines. Cities have transformed into magnets for those seeking a promise of a better life. Yet, rapid urbanization in the 20th century left the majority on the fringes of urban society with limited access to basic services, employment, and housing. Youth are perhaps those most affected by this urban transformation: investing in urban children and youth is not only a question of human rights and social justice. It is also about potential economic benefits and increasing citizen security, as youth are encouraged to become integrated members of society instead of contributing to the soaring urban crime and poverty rates.

The Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center sponsored a forum on February 10, 2003, "Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age," to understand more fully the relationship between urbanization, youth, poverty, and conflict. The forum convened experts and practitioners who highlighted the importance of prioritizing youth on the policy agenda, reducing the alienation that many youth feel, empowering youth through inclusive employment strategies, and taking heed of the particular needs of urban street children.

The complexities of urban living and challenges rapid urbanization pose to policymakers in developing countries should not be underestimated. Ann Van Dusen, Vice President of Save the Children, noted in her keynote address at the February 10th forum, despite the great potential for

urbanization to improve livelihoods for youth and others, cities also have been classified as a "kind of Darwinian universe," where only the tough survive. History has shown that urbanization cannot be stopped, but it can be transformed into a positive process, improving life prospects for youth while fostering both democracy and economic growth. Yet, the development community has been slow to respond to the challenges of urban living. With a more inclusive framework, the urban environment has the potential to afford opportunities to previously deprived communities and vastly improve the lives of youth in developing countries. The papers in this volume focus on children in cities and challenge the traditional concepts and myths of street youth and address new approaches to development programs through examining topics like conflict and employment.

Drastic demographic changes, combined with persistent poverty and unemployment, cause conflict in less developed countries. However, economic strategies alone cannot prevent conflict, increasing employment remains vital to the welfare of urban youth. In the first section of this volume, Tarik Yousef and Marc Sommers examine the ways alienated youth can become inclusive members of urban society. In his paper "Youth in the Middle East: Demography, Work, and Conflict," Tarik Yousef, Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, argues that economics alone cannot lead to violence. Dr. Yousef emphasizes that despite the challenge of truly unprecedented levels of unemployment, conflict is not inevitable. High levels of poverty and wide inequality gaps, not unemployment alone, are more likely to result in conflict, he noted, and both of these happen to be relatively absent in the Middle East. While intergenerational conflict and competition amongst excluded youth cohorts are perhaps probable, alienation among youth, conventionally thought of as the cause of conflict, might in fact portend positive outcomes. Forcing youth to demand a renegotiation of the social contract, their initial sense of isolation might in fact empower them and extend democracy in the Middle East.

Marc Sommers, Research Fellow at Boston University's African Studies Center, addresses the high sense of alienation youth feel in many African cities in his paper, "Youth, War, and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities." Despite perceived and real notions of alienation, youth in African cities have not historically been the catalysts of conflict. In fact, conflicts in Africa usually begin in the

rural area, causing masses of youth to flee the countryside. Therefore, claims that urban youth cause conflict seem unfounded in the African context. Dr. Sommers emphasizes the need to address female youth, as female youth migration is increasing and is a dynamic that is less understood than male migration. The need to develop informal education in order to accommodate youth's mobile lives and irregular hours is crucial so that youth may begin to feel included in urban society.

According to the International Labor Organization, more than a billion jobs must be created to accommodate new workers and reduce unemployment, particularly in the developing world, where minimal economic growth is forecast and economies are unlikely to be able to absorb the available labor supply. The task is further complicated by the fact that today significant proportions of young persons of working age are either unemployed or underemployed. Worldwide over 70 million young people are unemployed. Eighty percent of them are in developing countries or economies in transition. In addition, young people are more than twice as likely as adults to be unemployed. Part Two of this volume confronts the issues of youth unemployment and examines a variety of programs to help include urban youth in the labor market.

On average, young people are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. In an effort to fulfill the Millennium Declaration goal of finding "decent and productive work" for young people everywhere, the United Nations has created the Youth Employment Network. Steven Miller, Secretary of the Youth Employment Network, argues in his paper "United Nations Priority: Youth Employment and Its Implications for the Youth Population Explosion in the Developing World's Cities," that the first necessary change needs to come in the form of a conceptual transformation: youth need to be considered an asset, not a problem. Mr. Miller states that youth employment programs must center around employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship, and employment creation. In addition, city governments could play a critical role in facilitating a favorable regulatory environment, improving youth prospects for work in the informal economy, and encouraging infrastructure investments. Thus, capacity building in municipal government becomes a key policy issue.

In the context of Latin America, high rates of unemployment persist despite considerable economic growth in recent years. Caroline Fawcett,

Assistant Professor at American University, notes in her paper "Building a Bridge for the Road Too Far: Policy Analysis for the School-to-Work Transition in Latin America," that rates of youth unemployment are more than double the rates for adults, and school-to-work transitions have been elongated. Since the informal sector is the entry point into the labor market for almost all youth, it is vital that policymakers take heed of such realities. In an effort to devise long-term solutions, Dr. Fawcett observes the importance of targeting the poorest of the poor and fostering stronger stay-in-school incentives. She also discovers a number of intriguing disparities between different Latin American countries and concludes that young women are particularly vulnerable to the burden of youth unemployment.

Street children face a number of disadvantages, as they are usually denied access to many basic human rights, such as rights to survival, protection, service provision and participation in society, as specified by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These disadvantages make life for street youth more difficult than for other children living in poverty. Part Three of this volume presents a number of case studies that illustrate the reality of urban youth and address the need for alternative approaches to working with street children.

Rosemary McCarney and Stephanie Sauve address the need to include street involved youth in the agenda of international agencies in their paper "The Case for Street Youth: The Lost Decade." Although street youth are difficult to target in programming, it remains a necessary challenge to work with them and invest in them. Street youth have been historically absent on the policy agenda due to the decades of rural policy, which ignored the urban environment in general, not exclusively youth. International agencies need to learn a whole new set of skills in order to work successfully with youth, particularly street youth. According to the authors, current interventions often do not address the persistent patterns of poverty. They argue that the myths, stigmas, and stereotypes of adolescence need to be dispelled and that we must be careful not to stigmatize youth further by insinuating that youth foster terrorism. The issue should be guaranteeing human security and ensuring youth the right to work, the right of access to health care, and the right of access to education as they need it.

Sarah Thomas de Benitez outlines the main implications of the various initiatives and approaches for street-living children. She discusses three

different approaches, to working with homeless street children and her paper, "Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age: The Case of Homeless Street Children," focuses exclusively on homeless street youth. She concludes that a broad, rights-based approach is best, in which targeted initiatives are integrated, facilitated, and assessed by collaborative state–civil society partnerships as an effective option that enables homeless street children to gain access to their basic rights. She notes that street children live outside the usual norms of society, have a much lower probability of being able to access formal education and are easily exposed to street accidents, chronic skin infections, STDs, and abusive sexual relationships. Ms. Thomas de Benitez remarks that the way street children typically earn their money is "usually sporadic, always marginal, sometimes criminal and always in the informal market."

Clementine Fujimura examines the reality of urban youth in Russia and discusses the various myths that lead abandoned children to choose life on the streets. Dr. Fujimura notes that rampant disease and dangerous environmental conditions paint a bleak picture for street children in Russia, who live according to myths about urban life and their own invincibility. Cultural taboos preventing open discussion about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases endanger the lives of street children. Furthermore, what Dr. Fujimura perceives as an already overwhelming feeling of helplessness, ambivalence, fatalism and victimization among Russians is exaggerated among street children.

The urban environment provides a space that can promote development and improve livelihoods, but it can also aggravate despair. Current demographic trends indicate that a window of opportunity exists at the present moment for policymakers to capitalize on large cohorts of working age youth. Integrating youth into local economies is vital to the sustainability of urban areas. Yet, understanding the potential of youth will require that societies dispel the many myths about the inherent violence of youth. It is not enough that we make youth a priority on the policy agenda. We must seek to understand them, ameliorate the alienation they feel, and include them in the development process

As the articles in this volume illustrate, the situation of urban youth requires urgent attention. Creating programs to improve the livelihoods of urban youth, particularly girls, as they are vulnerable to the same risk factors as boys, presents an enormous challenge to the development commu-

nity. The need to address problems such as how youth can be assured a safe environment in which to grow and develop without the threat of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse and what can countries do to allow greater social and economic mobility opportunities for youth? Preventative programs need to be developed that address some of the disparate reasons why children become homeless. It is important to include children, but how can we ensure that youth play a participatory role in program and policy development which impact their lives? All of these challenges suggest that it is imperative to make municipal government more sensitive to the peculiar problems of youth populations and to increase the capacity of municipal governments and civil society organizations to deal with the policy challenges youth represent.

PART I

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND CONFLICT IN AN URBAN AGE

Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: Demography, Employment, and Conflict

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I n the 1990s, after decades of expansion that surpassed all regions except Sub-Saharan Africa, population growth rates in Middle East and North Africa decelerated.[1]

Contrary to previous forecasts emphasizing an intensification of the "population explosion" witnessed in the previous three decades, evidence from recent household-level surveys confirms the arrival of the long-awaited fall in fertility rates across much of the region. Accordingly, the defining feature of the region's populations in the future will be the rapidly changing age structure, dominated by the rise in the share of the working-age group (age 15 to 64 years) and the shrinking share of the dependent group (age 0 to 14 years). These demographic shifts are creating new policy opportunities and challenges that focus less on the education and health requirements of the young and more on the need for employment and economic growth.

What about the youth population (age 15–24 years) of the Middle East and North Africa? What are the implications of recent demographic dynamics for the relative share and absolute size of these young cohorts? What economic and political challenges does the region face as a result? Like elsewhere in the world, discussions of demographic trends in the region have been politically charged. Thus, worries over the impact of population growth on urbanization, poverty, and food sufficiency have been linked to social unrest and regime stability. Similarly, assessments of the "youth bulge" have taken place against the backdrop of concern over domestic conflict and global economic and political security. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, focused even more attention on the interplay between youth, socioeconomic conditions, and violence within the Middle East and North Africa as well as spillovers abroad.

This paper summarizes current knowledge of economic conditions affecting the region's youth population. It begins with an overview of demographic trends of young cohorts in recent years. This discussion sets the stage for an assessment of education and labor market outcomes. These elements are then brought together to shed light on the potential for conflict in the region.

THE REGION'S DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

The present population of the Middle East and North Africa is relatively young in age. Nearly 36 percent, or 115 million, of the region's people are under 15 years of age; an additional 21.5 percent, or nearly 70 million, are between 15 and 24 years. The young age structure of the region's pop–ulation is the result of major demographic changes that have taken place in the post–World War II period.

Historically, the region has maintained higher rates of fertility than most other developing regions. Between 1950 and 1970, fertility rates in the region averaged about 7 children per woman (figure 1). High fertility rates over time led to rapid rates of population growth and a rising share of the youth population. In 1950, the region's population was estimated at 80 mil–lion, a number that would double by 1975 and more than triple by 1990.

Figure 1. Fertility Rates of Developing Regions

Source: United Nations (2002).
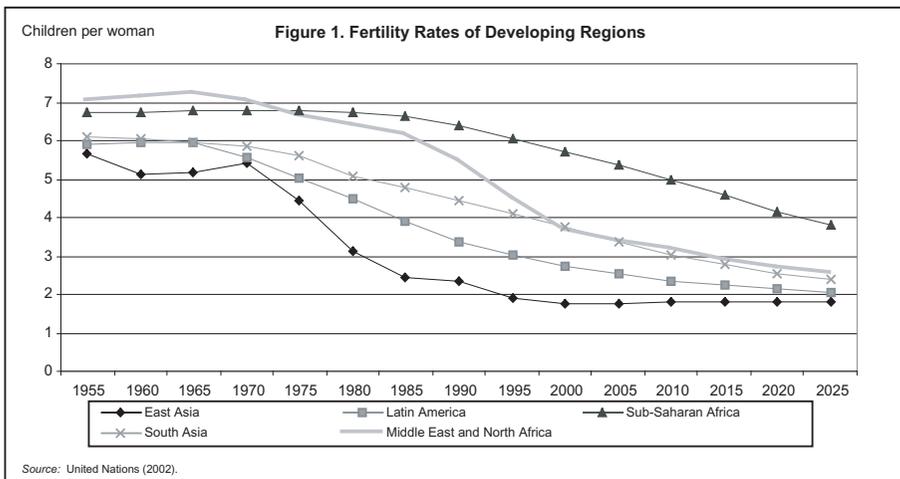
Fertility rates in the region, which began a slow decline in the 1970s, have undergone significant reductions since the late 1980s (Rashad and Khadr 2002). Several factors have been at work. First, massive investments in social services have reduced infant and child mortality and have raised adult life expectancy. Second, the rapid expansion in female educational attainment in the past two decades has led to a rise in female labor force participation. Third, the region's governments have reversed decades of pronatal policies, adopting family planning programs and expanding the availability of modern contraceptives (Roudi 2001). With these changes, fertility rates in the region fell to 5.4 children per woman in 1990; and by 2000, they averaged 3.6 children per woman.

Naturally, the persistently high fertility rates have implied that the region's age structure would exhibit an extended and large youth bulge. The youth population grew at an average rate of about 3.2 percent a year between 1970 and 2000. As a result, the youth share in the total population rose from 18 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1990 and peaked at 22 percent in 2000. At present, this cohort is growing at less than 2 percent a year, a trend that is forecast to continue. However, though growth rates are declining, the absolute size of youth flows into the population will remain high until the end of this decade. Between 1970 and 1990, the 15 to 24 age cohorts expanded by 22.3 million individuals, or about 1.1 mil-

Figure 2. Percentage Growth in the Youth Populations of Developing Countries (annual average rates)

Source: United Nations (2002).
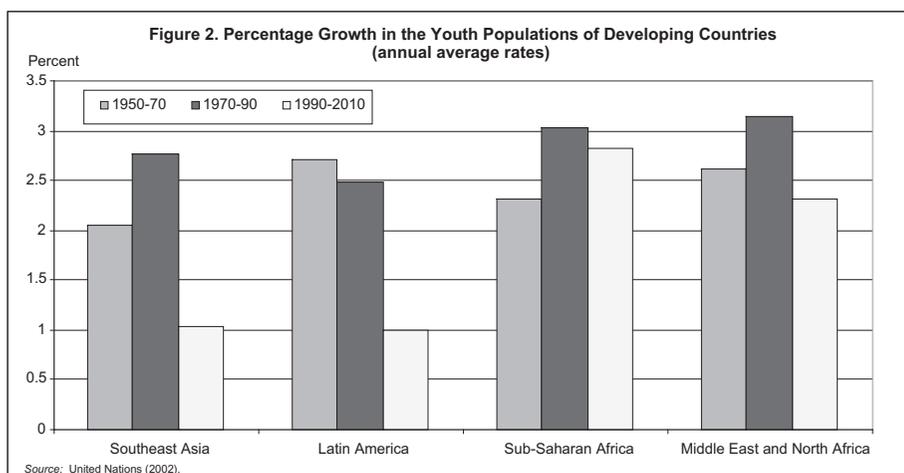
lion a year. Between 1990 and 2010, an additional 28.2 million will have been added, or 1.4 million a year (figure 2).

Not all individual countries in the Middle East and North Africa conform to the general pattern in the region. Early leaders in the fertility transition include Tunisia and Lebanon, both of which saw large fertility declines in the 1970s and have since reached replacement rates of about 2.1. These two countries, therefore, experienced both the earliest increases and shortest expansion in the youth population. They are followed closely by a number of countries in North Africa, including Egypt, which saw large fertility declines in the early 1980s. Other countries in the Levant, Jordan and Syria in particular, experienced rapid declines in the 1990s. Even Iran, where fertility rates increased after the 1979 revolution, witnessed a massive reduction in fertility after 1990 due in part to government population policies. As a result, the fertility rate in Iran fell from 5.6 in 1990 to 2.5 in 2000. The late movers in the fertility transition, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, are only beginning to experience the intensity of the youth bulge.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

What makes demographic developments in the region significant is their timing, their interaction with other socioeconomic trends, and their implications for employment outcomes. The relative size of young cohorts has a direct bearing on labor market pressures. The emergence of the youth bulge in the region coincided with the collapse of oil prices in the mid-1980s and the weak growth performance that characterized afterwards. (Keller and Nabli 2002) (figure 3). Rapid labor-force growth against a backdrop of economic difficulties led in the 1990s to the emergence of high unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa, averaging about 15 percent in the region, which makes the region second only to Sub-Saharan Africa. Unemployment is considerably higher among youth, mostly first-time job seekers whose rates of unemployment are twice that of the overall labor force in a number of the region's countries (Al-Qudsi, Assaad, and Shaban 1995) (figure 4).

Ironically, the present misfortunes of the region's youth in the labor market have affected the most educated generation of young cohorts in the region's recent history. Youth in the region today are exiting the

school system with far higher levels of overall education than their parents received. The mean years of schooling in the region, for those above 15 years of age, was 0.9 years in 1960. By 1980, it had risen to 2.6 years; and by 2000, mean schooling averaged 5.3 years (figure 5). This rise in educa-tional achievement in the region between 1980 and 2000 is the fastest of all the world's developing regions. In tandem, the gender gap in education

Figure 3. Real Income per Capita Growth, Selected Middle Eastern and North African Countries (average annual rate)

Source: World Bank (2002b).

Figure 4. Unemployment Trends in Selected Middle Eastern and North African Countries in the 1990s

Note: The data are for various years: Algeria, 1990; Bahrain, 1995; Egypt, 1998; Morocco, 1998; Tunisia, 2001, Yemen 1999.
Source: International Labor Organization (2002) and World Bank (2003).

Figure 5. Average Educational Attainment in Developing Regions (mean years of schooling)

Source: Barro and Lee (2001).

has narrowed substantially in the past two decades as female educational attainment has risen faster than that of males. At present, mean years of schooling for males and females are 6.2 and 4.5 years, respectively. The general rise in educational attainment, including tertiary schooling, has deepened the stock of human capital and given females greater access to labor markets, further reinforcing the fertility decline.

As young people stay in school for longer durations, their labor force participation rates have declined, partially abating the pressures on labor markets. In 1970, youth labor participation rates in the Middle East and North Africa were 47 percent. They declined to 45 percent in 1980, and remained at or below that level through 2000. As a result, while the youth population grew at 3.2 percent a year between 1970 and 1990, the economically active youth population expanded at a much lower rate, 1.9 percent. The fall in youth participation is due to declining male participation rates. Between 1970 and 1990, participation rates for males in the age groups 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 dropped from 58 percent to 36 percent and from 87 percent to less than 81 percent, respectively. By contrast, young females have seen substantial increases in labor participation. This explains the faster growth in the economically active youth population between 1990 and 2000, at 2.9 percent a year. Labor participation for females in the age group 20 to 24 rose from 24 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 2000.

Youth participation rates are expected to rise to 46 percent in 2010, again mostly due to increased female participation. In light of this, the growth in the economically active youth population, at 2.6 percent a year, in this decade will exceed the growth in the total youth population, forecast at 1.6 percent a year. To absorb these flows into labor markets and to lower existing unemployment requires a substantial acceleration in economic growth. For example, halving the unemployment rate by the end of 2015 and creating jobs for all new entrants in Algeria would call for an employment growth of 5.0 percent and a real output growth of 6.5 percent a year during the next 15 years (Dhonte, Bhatacharya, and Yousef 2001). The same is true for Iran, where an average annual growth rate of employment of about 4.1 percent is required to cut unemployment in half and absorb the newcomers into the labor force. Tunisia and Egypt, conversely, face better prospects given their more mature age structures and lower unemployment rates, and yet both will face pressures to accelerate output and employment growth.

STATUS QUO BIAS AGAINST YOUTH

There is little doubt that the region's young first-time job seekers bore the brunt of high unemployment and stagnant real wages in the 1990s. Although the sheer size of these young cohorts may have contributed to undermining their labor market fortunes, demographic factors alone do not provide a sufficient explanation. As we saw above, the youth bulge did not always translate into intense labor market pressures due to declining participation by male cohorts. Moreover, growing labor supplies do not determine employment outcomes independent of demand conditions. In fact, the expansion in the young and educated labor force growth in the context of a changing age structure should have, at least theoretically, provided a boost to economic growth. After all, demographic gifts have been translated elsewhere in the world into significant gains in savings, investment, and growth (Williamson and Yousef 2002). In the Middle East and North Africa, government employment policies, as well as the pace of policy reforms, have played a central role in limiting the scope of job creation and higher productivity.

The region's governments historically have maintained privileged positions in labor markets, employing significant segments of the population

in the civil service and public-sector enterprises. Higher wages and non-wage benefits together with job security in the public sector have implied that the majority of young entrants into the labor force would seek employment in the public sector (Assaad 1997). As part of the stabilization and reform programs in the 1990s, many of the region's governments implemented a freeze on the hiring of new workers just as the oil boom generation began to enter labor markets. However, a restructuring of public employment did not complement the freeze on hiring and wages. As a result, relatively high wages and job security, in comparison with the private sector, continued to provide strong incentives for new entrants to seek jobs in the public sector and increase the reservation wage for employment in the private sector. Extended waiting lines for increasingly scarce public-sector employment, especially among job seekers with secondary education, have affected most countries in the region.

Moreover, slow progress with economic restructuring and protracted reform programs have curtailed the emergence of dynamic private sectors that would provide a new engine for job creation and economic growth (Dasgupta, Keller, and Srinivasan 2002). An elaborate web of labor regulations has pushed economic activity into informal sectors, where the bulk of job creation is taking place. These regulations have led to the creation of a two-tier system that overprotects formal-sector public employees and underprotects workers in the informal sector. Even where the formal private sector expanded employment opportunities, skill mismatches undermined the prospects of young workers. The past incentive structure encouraged young graduates to seek degrees in fields that increased their chances of securing employment in the public sector but that were not in high demand in the private sector. It is not an accident that surveyed businesses in a number of the region's countries complain that, despite the presence of a relatively well-educated labor force, workers lack the skills needed in market-oriented economies.

MIGRATION NO LONGER A SAFETY VALVE

The effects of demography, public hiring policies, and economic restructuring on youth unemployment were reinforced by dwindling prospects for regional and international migration. Prior to the 1990s, millions of the region's workers migrated for work abroad, largely in response to the

demand for expatriate labor in the oil-exporting countries in the 1970s and 1980s. But this safety valve is currently operating with much less force due to the changing composition of demand for expatriate labor in the labor-importing countries, in addition to the convergence of demographic trends across the Middle East and North Africa. The first Gulf War saw the forced return of millions of the region's workers to their home countries and their subsequent replacement by migrants from South Asia. Moreover, many of the oil-exporting economies are experiencing rapid labor growth and high unemployment in their national labor forces, further reducing the incentive to import labor from neighboring countries.

Europe was the chosen destination for North African workers. Given the significant income gap between the two regions, the rising share of young adults in the Middle East and North Africa is likely to have spurred an increase in the demand for migration to Europe (Yousef 2000). This demand is especially strong in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia where geographic proximity and networks of friends and families provide additional incentives for labor mobility. From a labor supply side, this demand for entrance into protected European markets appears convenient in light of Europe's increasingly aging population and projected thinning of young cohorts. Indeed, the share of the working-age population in eight labor-exporting Middle Eastern and North African countries to that of the European Union countries has risen from 30 percent in 1970 to 65 percent in 2000 and will climb to 100 percent in 2015. More striking is the ratio of likely movers (ages 15 to 29) from the region to the total labor market stayers in the European Union (ages 20 to 64), which will more than double, from 12 percent in 1970 to 29 percent in 2015.

But European labor markets will remain closed, at least in the short run, to the entry of labor from the Middle East and North Africa. The Euro-Mediterranean Agreement focuses solely on trade and investment without incorporating labor mobility. The shortage of unskilled workers in European Union countries has led several countries to import labor on a short-term basis from the neighboring transition countries. Thus, in the medium term, the option of migrating to work in Europe is not available for the majority of job seekers in the Middle East and North Africa. Over the long run, however, demography might work in favor of relaxing the constraints on emigration from the region. The need for a policy shift on

labor mobility is supported by the rising trend in illegal migration and the realization that trade and labor flows would complement each other in encouraging the region's more rapid economic integration with the European Union.

POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY

What are the consequences of increased youth unemployment? Academics and policy analysts are increasingly recognizing the links between the economic prospects of youth and other socioeconomic phenomena, especially social unrest and political instability. To the extent that unemployment contributes to poverty and inequality, it undermines social mobility and amplifies intergenerational inequities. Differences between households create psychological stress for the relatively poor and contribute to higher morbidity, mortality, and violence rates (Hsieh and Pugh 1993). Finally, inequality contributes to political instability by heightening discontent and fueling unrest. These latter effects, by increasing the probability of coups, revolutions, mass violence—or, more generally, by increasing policy uncertainty—have a negative effect on investment, wages, and income growth (Perotti 1996). In all, vicious circles are created that lead both to inferior political and economic outcomes.

Table 1. Trends in Poverty and Inequality

Region	Poverty Head Count of $1 a Day (average)		Gini Coefficient (average)	
	1980s	1990s	1980s	1990s
Middle East and North Africa	1.7	2.0	0.39	0.35
East Asia	23.7	14.9	0.39	0.39
East and Central Asia	0.2	4.4	0.25	0.34
Latin America	21.2	14.9	0.49	0.48
South Asia	36.0	32.9	0.31	0.33
Sub-Saharan Africa	24.6	42.2	0.41	0.44

Source: World Bank (2002a).

Although the Middle East and North Africa have faced high levels of youth and adult unemployment, these have not raised poverty rates or widened income inequality. In comparison with other regions, poverty in the region has remained quite low, and inequality is moderate (table 1). Thus far, and despite growing constraints, governments in the region have managed to stave off poverty through redistributive programs, including public employment and free public health and education services (Diwan 1995). At one extreme is Kuwait, with more than 90 percent of its nationals on the public-sector payroll. In other countries, the share of government employment in total employment ranges from about 7 percent in Morocco to 26 percent in Egypt, with the average for the region around 18 percent. Redistributive policies, together with the patriarchal structures of families in the region, have created strong networks of social protection for the unemployed, permitting youth to spend extended periods of time searching and/or waiting for public-sector jobs. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is little correlation between poverty and unemployment in the region.

Youth, Grievance, and Conflict

Although there is little evidence of rising poverty and inequality in the Middle East and North Africa, outside observers have blamed economic conditions for the political unrest in the region—in Algeria and Egypt in the 1990s, and in Saudi Arabia and Yemen more recently. According to this conventional wisdom, trends in violence, especially when associated with the expression of political Islam, are highly correlated with the economic disenfranchisement of young generations. What appears to matter for the well-being of youth is not inequality and poverty per se but the lack of opportunities and access to resources in systems controlled by entrenched elites and interest groups (Braungart 1984). In this regard, high unemployment among educated youth serves as a better indicator of the potential for social grievances. As the young struggle to find jobs, they fail to take on the responsibilities of adulthood and to secure their desired goals of employment, marriage, and social standing. With the buildup of grievances, youth lose faith in the system of governance that has failed their aspirations.

The existence of social grievances, however, is not sufficient for the incidence of conflict, whether sporadic violence or civil wars. The com-

bination of social grievances and youth bulges may provide one basis for conflict (figures 6 and 7). The timing of political instability in the region's countries cited above certainly conforms to this prediction. However, it also matters how the systems of governance manage violence (Urdal 2002). Open, democratic systems are generally flexible enough to allow youth participation in the system and to permit young people to voice

Figure 6. Youth Bulge in the Middle East and North Africa (ratio of age 15 to 24 population to age 25 to 64 population in percent)

Source: United Nations (2002).

Figure 7. Youth Bulges and Domestic Conflict

Source: Urdal (2002).
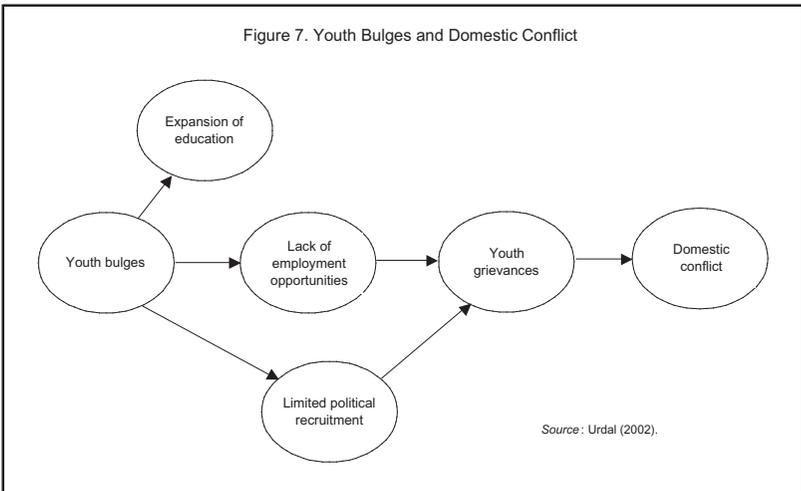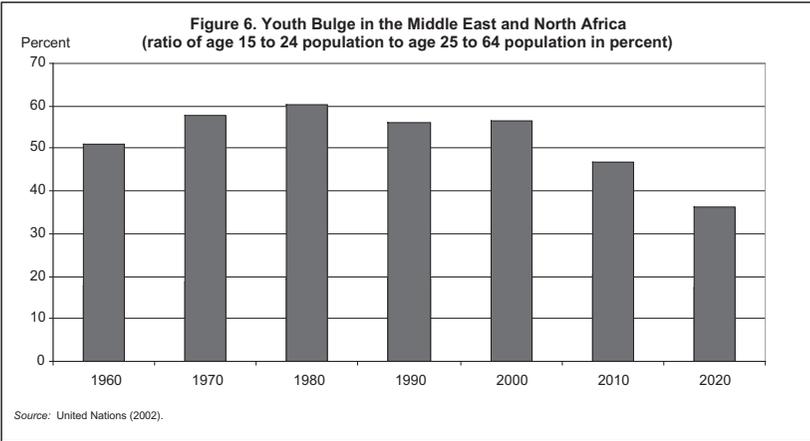
their frustrations through peaceful means. Strong authoritarian states, in contrast, are able to repress violence and manage conflict through coercion. Somewhat paradoxically, those states in transition are the most vulnerable to outbreaks of conflict. When one looks at extended domestic conflicts in the region's recent history, there are strong correlations between the emergence of a youth bulge, coupled with economic difficulties and an inability of the state to contain conflict, either through democratic inclusion or coercive repression.

The persistent violence in Algeria serves as an informative example. After the fall in oil prices in the mid-1980s, the country experienced severe macroeconomic imbalances and negative output growth. These shocks took place just as the country's youth population was reaching its peak after growing rapidly in the 1980s by about 3.8 percent a year. Large numbers of young cohorts were entering the labor force, putting labor markets under tremendous stress. Unemployment rose from 16 percent in 1980 to 24 percent in 1992, and for youth, unemployment reached close to 40 percent. The Algerian government was in the middle of implementing moderate political reforms. In 1992, the country was poised to initiate open parliamentary elections. The Islamists, buoyed by the political support of a frustrated young population, seized the day, and the government reacted by canceling the election results. The state's reserved application of democratic reforms backfired, setting the spark to a conflict that has yet to come to an end (Lowi 2002).

ISLAM, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE

What role does political Islam play in conflict? It is often claimed that large young cohorts experiencing economic dislocation and political exclusion present fertile ground for identity groups seeking change through violent means (Richards 1995). A sense of collective identity may in fact be a precondition for youth bulges and grievances to be translated into conflict. Recent research on civil wars in Africa has emphasized the role of ethnicity in raising the risks of conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 1998), but in most Middle Eastern and North African countries, ethnic fractionalization as commonly defined is low. Furthermore, generational divides do not provide a platform for identity politics, even when socioeconomic conditions suggest that they could, as in the case of youth

unemployment. The emergence of political Islam, a phenomenon connected to overall economic and social conditions, may have provided the necessary source for collective identity. The fact that violence in the region was transmitted abroad may be driven by the belief among some groups that external threats and regional conflicts are responsible for local conditions.

Within this context, could democratic reforms bring about greater voice and accountability to the political systems of the Middle East and North Africa? This would appear to be the case in light of the closed and authoritarian nature of regimes in the region, which at present are increasingly unable to sustain their legitimacy by providing jobs and services. And as recent research suggests, attitudes toward Islam may be less of an obstacle toward a democratic transformation than has commonly been presumed. An analysis of opinion polls in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine has found no correlation between individuals claiming strong religious attachments and attitudes toward democracy (Tessler 2002). This finding cuts across all age cohorts, lending support to the notion that generational politics are less important than broad political and policy concerns. Moreover, in all the country samples, support for democracy is an increasing function of education, irrespective of attitudes toward the role of Islam in politics.

Democratic transitions are, however, inherently unstable, especially when taking place amid youth bulges and economic difficulties. Though permitting voice and inclusion, these transitions may fail to deliver sound policies and economic outcomes that address youth grievances. As a result, countries may become more susceptible to conflict and instability. Recent political and economic developments in Iran are consistent with these observations, and they explain U.S. anxieties toward pushing for an early transition to democracy in Iraq. Moreover, to the extent that conflict is linked to external circumstances, domestic reforms may not be sufficient to neutralize grievances. In the Middle East and North Africa, conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for example, have provided political ammunition and contributed directly to the emergence of transnational militant movements. A prolonged American occupation of Iraq, coupled with a disorderly transition to democracy, could very well aggravate conditions elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

The demographic transition of the Middle East and North Africa has accelerated in the past decade due to rapid declines in fertility. But the persistently high population growth rates in the past have implied that the region's age structure will exhibit an extended youth bulge. The large flows of educated young cohorts into labor markets in the past decade coincided with the weak economic conditions, leading to high unemployment. The combination of economic grievances and authoritarian governments led to the spread of instability in some countries where Islamic movements challenged the power structures. To avert further turmoil, rapid economic growth—coupled with gradual political liberalization and greater regional stability—is required.

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Notes

1. Throughout this paper, the Middle East and North Africa region refers to the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.

Youth, War, and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities

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To many foreign observers, large African cities seem unfathomable. They may be described as immense, fetid, ugly, dangerous, and nearly out of control. Many are wracked by water and housing shortages. School and health facilities may be nearing collapse. Parks, where they exist, may be filled with street children and thieves. HIV/AIDS and other illnesses usually run rampant. Their industrial base—a cornerstone of urban economies in the North—is frequently limited. The municipal tax base, and city services in general, tend to be exceedingly insufficient. Unemployment, at least officially, is always sky-high. Crime seems to be a nearly constant threat. Just why anyone would choose to live in such a place, particularly the young and the poor who make up most of Africa's urban residents, seems difficult for many to imagine.

The challenges confronting youth in urban Africa are further complicated and made considerably more serious by war's pervasive impact. As Williams (2002, 10) has noted, "No regions, and few countries, in Africa have been free of the ravages of civil wars, conflicts between African countries, dictatorial governments, and the intervention of outside powers and other African governments." These disruptions have driven ever more Africans toward cities, causing often extraordinary increases in the size of cities and expanding the purposes, utility, and culture of urban life—quite often in ways that are unanticipated, overlooked, or hidden.

This paper first attempts to contrast some commonly held perspectives on Africa's cities and the urban youth who have come to demographically dominate them with a look at how urban youth live in large African cities, particularly those who have been affected by conflict. The paper

then uses these contrasting views of African cities and urban youth to suggest how the challenge of youth unemployment in war-affected African cities might be better addressed.

"BECOMING URBANIZED:" AFRICA'S URBANIZATION AND WAR'S IMPACT

Africa's rapid urbanization stands out in a world that is increasingly turning toward cities. Ogbu and Ikiara (1995, 53) note that first Africa surpassed all other regions of the world during the 1975–80 period, when African cities grew at an average annual rate of 4.9 percent. By the 1985–90 period, the rate had increased to 5.0 percent, making Africa "the region with the highest urban population growth rate in the developing world."

   This staggering drive toward cities contains a number of provocative trends. East Africa has the highest urban growth rate of any global region (Torrey 1998, B6). The United Nations estimates that by 2025 nearly half of all East Africans will live in cities, and almost three-quarters of the population of Southern Africa will reside in urban areas (Hope 1998, 347). Although "young adult men predominate among [urban] migrants in Africa" (Hope 1998, 352), the number of female youth in cities is also increasing (Chant and Radcliffe 1992; Gugler 1996). Unusually high rural-urban migration rates reported for some African countries dramatize the ongoing urge to urbanize. For example, the migrant share of urban growth in Tanzania, whose capital, Dar es Salaam, has for decades been one of Africa's fastest-growing cities, is 85 percent (Hope 1998, 351).[3] Almost inevitably, signs of a rapid concentration of youth in African cities raise the specter of youth unemployment, discord, and unrest. Half of all South African youth are unemployed, for instance, a figure that is expected to rise to between 60 and 70 percent in the next few years (Guardian 2001, 1). In 1993, Tanzania's minister of youth, Hassan Diria, stated that slightly more than 3 percent of the country's youth had jobs in the formal sector. Diria then chastised the "poor upbringing of the anti-socials"—an invented catchphrase for young urban troublemakers (Maunya 1993, 1).

   Although "the dearth of information" remains "one of the most significant problems in addressing urbanization" in Africa (Rakodi 1997b, 10),

the impact of war on African urbanization stands out as a particularly understudied and overlooked subject. Strong indications of its significance, however, exist across Sub-Saharan Africa. From Angola to Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Sierra Leone, hundreds of thousands of people displaced by wars have sought refuge in capital cities. For example, Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, saw its population rise from 384,499 in 1985 to an estimated 837,000 in 2001 (Africa South of the Sahara 2002, 926). This 217 percent increase mainly took place during the decade of civil war (1991–2001) and may not have accounted for internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in the Freetown area, which were thought to have reached 500,000 by 1995 (Synge 2002, 920) and remained a significant population throughout the latter stages of the war.

Estimates gathered in discussions with officials working in Sierra Leone's capital suggested that Freetown might have far more residents than the published estimates indicate. Regardless of the actual figure, however, the Freetown example nonetheless demonstrates how urban populations can grow rapidly during and immediately after a civil war.

Many African countries engulfed by war face, among other calamities, an overwhelming of the capital city. Unfortunately, it is never very clear just how many people live in urban Africa. As Rakodi (1997a, 53) notes, "Much of the data on recent urbanization trends [in Africa] is . . . unreliable and many of the apparently precise figures are mere estimates." During periods of war, the chances for data gathering get much worse.

War can radically transform urban areas, particularly for its youth, in ways that become permanent. Jacobsen and her colleagues highlight this tendency in their research on IDP lives in Khartoum, the capital of war-torn Sudan. Sudan has approximately 4 million IDPs—known to be the world's largest IDP population—about 1.8 million of whom live in or near Khartoum (Jacobsen, Lautze, and Osman 2001, 78, 80). Viewed as aligned with the national government's opponents during the 20-year civil war, Sudan's urban IDPs have faced ongoing and extensive persecution by the government. "More than 1 million displaced persons," Jacobsen and her colleagues note, "have lost their homes—often more than once—to the [government's] bulldozers" (p. 81).

Significantly, the various methods for persecuting IDPs have not dimmed the resolve of most of Khartoum's IDPs to endure life in the capital. In a 1992 survey, for example, 80 percent of IDPs wanted to remain

there (Jacobsen, Lautze, and Osman 2001, 85). In addition, "Ten years of displacement to the urban areas of Khartoum have resulted in a fundamental shift in identity, particularly among young people, who consider themselves to be urbanized and have no real desire to return to their rural origins" (p. 84).

The fact that "young people see their future" in Khartoum (Jacobsen, Lautze, and Osman 2001, 84) is a phenomenon that can be found in other African capitals as well, despite the hardships and persecutions youth may face there. Dar es Salaam was the site of a series of government campaigns to return urban migrants, most of whom were young men, to rural areas. Every effort failed (Armstrong 1987; Kerner 1988; Lugalla 1995; Sommers 2001a). As Sawers (1989, 854–55) noted, "the deportations of Dar es Salaam's unemployed wasted scarce transportation resources without affecting the city's population growth." The idea that migrant youth—voluntary as well as forced migrant—consider themselves to be "urbanized" is a theme that will surface again later in this paper.

The shift of refugees into cities—refugee youth in particular (Sommers 2001b)—further underscores Africa's urbanization phenomenon. In 1985, for example, Rogge (1985, 128) reported that "an increasing proportion of [African] refugees of rural origin, in becoming displaced, simultaneously become urbanized." Ten years later, Bascom (1995, 205) noted how African refugees "go to great lengths to avoid camps and get into urban centres." Indeed, understanding why a foreigner fleeing persecution would refuse free humanitarian assistance in refugee camps and risk persecution and marginalization in cities suggests that the uses and appeal of African cities may be much greater than is generally suspected.[4]

AFRICAN YOUTH IN CITIES: POPULAR PERCEPTIONS AND REMEDIES

Large, swelling African cities are awful places. This, at least, is a perspective shared by many foreign visitors and analysts, in addition to some urban residents. Certainly one of the most renowned purveyors of this perception is Kaplan (1996: xv), whose 1994 article, "The Coming Anarchy" (Kaplan 1994) was, according to Richards (1996, xv), "faxed to every American embassy in Africa, and has undoubtedly influenced U.S. policy."

Notwithstanding Richards' claim, it is clear that Kaplan has a knack for describing African cities with dreadful clarity. His take on urban West Africa is one of wholesale ruin. Consider, for example, his "first memorable experience of West Africa"—a whiff of Abidjan, which he described as "an odor of sour sweat, rotting fruit, hot iron and dust, urine drying on the sun-warmed stone, feces, and fly-infested meat in an immovable field of damp heat" (Kaplan 1996, 16). But West Africa's seeming disintegration was actually taking place in more pervasive ways. Having limited his interactions with ordinary Africans, Kaplan draws broad conclusions. His picture of urban West Africa is utterly without hope:

> As it decays and people pour into coastal shanty-magnets, West Africa is left with high-density concentrations of human beings who have been divested of certain stabilizing cultural models, with no strong governmental institutions or communities to compensate for the loss (Kaplan 1996, 29).

The youth who populate West African cities face the "corrosive effects of cities, where African culture is being redefined as deforestation tied to overpopulation" (Kaplan 1996, 34). Shoumatoff (1988, xiv) views the emergence of large African cities as the source of "societal madness." Such madness is best seen in the behavior of "detribalized young men" in Nairobi, whom he describes as "lost souls wandering in the vast space between the traditional and the modern worlds" who "can be heard howling in the streets of downtown Nairobi in the middle of the night." Kaplan further supports this vision with his depiction of the young men that fill West African cities as "out of school, unemployed, loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite" (p. 16). Not even the youth's apparently good physical condition was a good sign. Instead, "their robust health and good looks made their predicament sadder" (p. 16).

As Linden (1996, 58) observes, war makes urban situations even worse, for it "inflicts unique horrors on those trapped in cities that at the best of times have trouble taking care of the injured, the hungry, and the displaced." Worse still, Kaplan (1996, 12) contends that conflicts are inspired in Africa's urban slums. "The perpetrators of future violence," he argues, "will likely be urban born, with no rural experience from which to draw." To be sure, there is little current evidence to support Kaplan's pre-

diction. Although urban violence persists in many African cities, it is also true that very few, if any, African civil conflicts in recent decades—including those involving Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan—derived their origins from urban unrest. Rebel groups have tended to find their followings outside large cities, such as the current rebellion taking place in Ivory Coast.

Many observers of urban Africa contend that the reasons why rural Africans contemplate urban migration are mainly inspired by desperation and a lack of viable options. Accordingly, a popular remedy for intense urbanization is to intensify investment in rural Africa and thus draw people away from cities. This view is based on the contention that there is an urban bias in African government outlays that must be reversed. Hope (1998, 355) has argued that "the urban bias in African development policy has resulted in the rural areas lagging behind the urban areas in access to basic services and thereby reinforcing the concentration of poverty in those rural areas." As a result, he contends that shifting more development resources away from cities toward rural areas "would contain the rural population, diminish their desire to migrate to urban areas, and thereby reduce both the rate and negative consequences of urbanization" (p. 356).[5]

Contrast this perspective of pronounced urban bias in development investment to Linden's argument that "even without war, the quality of life for the poor has declined to the point where observers who long believed city dwellers had the advantage now recognize that large numbers of impoverished urbanites are worse off than the rural poor" (Linden 1996, 58). Furthermore, the cases of Khartoum and Dar es Salaam suggest that even persecuting urban youth cannot extinguish their resolve to remain in cities. Enticing urban youth back to rural areas through increased investment in the countryside may yield very minimal success. As Ogbu and Ikiara (1995, 54) note, "There are some instances of reverse migration [from urban to rural areas] but this has been in trickles." Most of Africa's urban youth, it appears, are very likely to remain in cities regardless of the degree of investment in the countryside or the difficulties they face in cities.

URBAN YOUTH IN CONTEXT

If "cities are essentially locations for economic activity" (Rakodi 1997b, 4) and yet "African countries are substantially more urbanized than is jus-

tified by their degree of economic development" (Hope 1998, 356), then something is amiss. What is drawing millions of youth toward urban Africa? Is it simple economic desperation that attracts them?

This paper argues that the urban attractions for African youth are varied and significant. Yet this does not mean that large African cities generally resemble the sort of graceful urban areas that have made cities in many parts of the world famous as centers for culture, history, and romance. Many if not most neighborhoods in urban Africa are nothing of the kind. It is also not to say that huge African cities are neither difficult nor dangerous. They are. What is suggested here, however, are three ways that cities can provide African youth with much more than the hope for some kind of economic advancement.

Opportunities for Coexistence

In the face of Kaplan's depiction of African cities as "neoprimitive shanty-domains" (1996, 83) and its youthful residents as prime examples of what he perceived as "nature unchecked" (1994, 54) lies an entirely different conception of urban Africa. The case of Rwanda and Burundi in Central Africa is instructive, for though urbanization is transforming much of Sub-Saharan Africa, the continued inability for most Rwandans and Burundians to congregate in cities—the proportion of urban residents in Rwanda is the lowest in the world, whereas Burundi ranks third—has contributed to a degree of rural isolation and fear that has fueled waves of massive ethnic killing, including genocide, in recent decades.[6] Consider the following comment about Burundi, which has a constellation of ethnic identities (mainly Hutu and Tutsi), terror, and violence similar to that of Rwanda's:

> [The] absence of big cities has had a significant effect on divisions within the country. Without the opportunity to mingle together in large numbers in cosmopolitan settings, most Burundians remain largely within their ethnic group, their clan, and their region. By contrast, many of those Burundians who live in the capital are conscious of their ethnicity only in times of conflict. . . . I saw many cases in April 1995 of young people of the capital unable to identify with an ethnic group and often attacked by both groups before they migrated abroad or chose, against their will, to be Hutu or Tutsi. Extremists on

both sides despise them because they constitute living proof of the possibility of peaceful coexistence (Ould-Abdallah 2000: 21).

Here we have a depiction of urban Africa that directly contradicts the image of African cities as centers of social degradation and predatory violence. Cities force people to mix and become familiar with members of groups whose paths might never cross in rural areas. In this sense, cities hold the potential to expand opportunities for peaceful coexistence, at least in some cases.

Empowerment through Alienation

Across Tanzania, in even the remotest corners of the country, youth speak what has come to be known as the "language of the ignorant" (in Swahili, *lugha ya wahuni*), "angry Swahili" (Kiswahili *kali*), "dar language" (*kidar*), "young people's language" (*lugha ya vijana*), and still other names. What is called a language is actually not even a dialect. Instead, it is an ever-changing vocabulary of words that Tanzanian youth use to confer their connection to Bongoland (literally "Brainland," the nickname for Dar es Salaam) and their separation from elite society.

Keeping up with the latest words from "Bongo" signifies an aspiration to migrate to Tanzania's capital for those youth still residing in the countryside. The proportion of youth living in rural Tanzania is, in some areas, noticeably low. As early as 1981, the Tanzanian scholar C. K. Omari was able to remark that, "many rural areas nowadays are left with old people. Go the villages, and you will observe this phenomenon instantly as you set your foot there" (1981, 2).

"Language of the ignorant" vocabulary words have many sources and meanings. They can be used to describe the difficulties of urban life, as in the greeting, "How are your anxieties?" (*Harbari ya mihangaiko*?). Most Tanzanian youth, though fluent in one national language, Swahili, know scarcely any English, Tanzania's second national language. English, however, can signify a person's connection to wealth, glamour, and modern, forward-looking ideas and activities. English words may be assigned new meanings in the "language of the ignorant," and can come from a variety of sources. One phrase was taken from a plastic bag printed in Zanzibar and sold in Dar es Salaam and other mainland towns. The bag had pictures of Western-style clothes and other items signifying a "modern" lifestyle.

Across the bag, in large letters, was the phrase "Fashion Design." Soon, "Fashion Design" became a response to greetings such as "How are you?" (*Harbari yako*?), "What's up?" (*Mambo gani*?), and "How are your anxieties?"

The "language of the ignorant" is also used to describe how many urban youth in Tanzania see themselves: as alienated outcasts. There was a compelling example of this soon after the beginning of the first Gulf War in 1991. Saddam Hussein almost instantly became a folk hero for many in Dar es Salaam and across the country. They viewed Saddam as a defiant underdog, fighting valiantly against insurmountable odds. His Scud missiles became symbols of the underdog's counterpunch. Soon after the first round of Scud missiles was launched by the Iraqi regime, the word "Scudi" could be observed across Dar es Salaam, written in graffiti and scrawled into the dirt on buses and other vehicles. In no time, "Scudi *ya* Bongo" became a catchphrase for a fearless, unsinkable urban youth.[7]

The "Scudi *ya* Bongo" example is instructive because it signifies how many youth in Tanzania's capital feel alienated and marginalized by elite society, including leading members of civil society. In a sense, the masses of alienated youth in Africa's cities call the idea of "civil society" into question. Indeed, in some African capitals, it is often unclear the extent to which "civil society members" truly represent the poor young people who throng the country's towns and cities. Relatively few may vote, and they are probably unlikely to be well represented in any census.[8] They are present in cities, in short, but their connection to civil society may be at best tenuous.

It is thus ironic to consider that many of Africa's urban youth, who are members of perhaps the dominant population segment in African cities, may feel both alienated by and marginalized from mainstream urban society: a majority feeling like a minority. Marcharia (1994, 161) highlights how Africa's urban youth are typically overlooked: "The youth in most African cities make up at least 60 percent of the urban population, yet most programs in these cities rarely address this specific problem." In this context, then, it can hardly be surprising that impoverished, unskilled, poorly educated urban youth may recast themselves as heroic underdogs. Rather than accepting their sidelined social existence, many celebrate it.

The dangers of overlooking and not accepting Africa's youth, and the nearly unbridled determination of so many youth to migrate to and

remain in cities, tend to surface during and after conflicts. The assault on Freetown by the child and youth soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in January 1999 dramatizes how youth alienation and furor can be manipulated to terrible and devastating effect. Calling its invasion Operation No Living Thing, the RUF entered Sierra Leone's capital and initiated among the most grisly military actions in modern African history: Junger, for example, noted that "war does not get worse" than what happened in Freetown early in 1999 (2000, 116).

By the time of the 1999 Freetown invasion, however, RUF leaders had already found ways to adapt popular cultural figures to specific purposes. Richards had already described how the RUF used the first Rambo film (*Rambo: First Blood*) as a military training video, highlighting the idea of a misunderstood individual using well-honed military skills to battle against predatory forces (Richards 1996, 57–58).

In Operation No Living Thing, the RUF adapted another "patron saint"—the deceased American "Gangsta" Rap musician, Tupac Shakur, popularly known simply as 'Tupac.' "The rebels [that is, the RUF] wrote Tupac's lyrics on the side of their vehicles" during the Freetown invasion, one Sierra Leonean refugee later recalled. "They wrote 'Death Row,' 'Missing in Action,' 'Hit them Up,' 'Only God Can Judge,' and 'All Eyez on Me' on them." Junger also notes that the rebels "favored Tupac T-shirts and fancy haircuts" (2000, 116). Drugged and brutalized, terrorized and truly terrifying, the rebel child and youth soldiers attacked Freetown residents. Amputations, rapes, and killings took place across the city. Descriptions of the mayhem, as in other depictions of RUF military tactics during the war, border on the unbelievable:

> Teenage soldiers, out of their minds on drugs, rounded up entire neighborhoods and machine-gunned them or burned them alive in their houses. They tracked down anyone whom they deemed to be an enemy—journalists, Nigerians, doctors who treated wounded civilians—and tortured and killed them. They killed people who refused to give them money, or people who didn't give them enough money, or people who looked at them wrong. They raped women and killed nuns and abducted priests and drugged children to turn them into fighters. . . . They had been fighting since they were eight or nine, some of them, and sported names such as Colonel Bloodshed,

> Commander Cut Hands, Superman, Mr. Die, and Captain Backblast
> . . . Although the rebel assault . . . failed militarily, it had so traumatized
> the civilian population that they were prepared to do almost any-
> thing—including accept the rebels as part of their government—in
> order to bring an end to the war (Junger 2000, 116–17).

An estimated 6,000 people, most of them civilians, were killed during this operation, while the RUF abducted perhaps 2,000 children and youth for child soldiering and related activities (Economist Intelligence Unit 1999, 1). One refugee youth recalled that "the girls were the worst," because they castrated their male victims. "Tupac uses bad words," another Sierra Leonean refugee explained. "They are dangerous. The Rebels take [Tupac's lyrics] very seriously, and try to apply the lyrics."[9] During breaks in the action, refugee informants described how rebel soldiers would dance to Tupac's music.

Tupac Shakur is famous across Africa, most particularly among urban youth. His music is as common in many urban neighborhoods as Bob Marley's once was. His face and poses, pictured on clothing and in murals, are now widely familiar. A popular T-shirt has a black background, showing Tupac (spelled "2Pac") looking alert, with U.S. dollar signs ringing the collar and his most popular slogan, "All Eyez on Me," across the bottom. "All Eyez on Me," indeed—Tupac's lyrics expressing his alienation, fury, and his conviction that his quest for revenge is thoroughly justified, the police sirens in the background of many of his songs, the belief that he was not really murdered but is still alive (often proclaimed in "Tupac Lives" graffiti), all conjure an image of a defiant, proud antihero, and an inspiration for many of Africa's young and alienated urbanites.

Defining Survival as Success

Surviving in cities is a hustle for many African youth. Many are neither fully employed nor entirely unemployed. Much of what they do to make ends meet may be illegal. This may be particularly true for those affected by war. Jacobsen and her colleagues list manual child labor jobs such as "water vendors, petty traders, sellers of plastic bags," and making mud bricks, washing cars, and polishing shoes (Jacobsen, Lautze, and Osman 2001, 94–95) as urban IDP occupations in Khartoum. Prostitution and brewing beer are also common. There is also criminal work, which may

range from simple thieving and vandalism to outright gang violence. A particularly compelling postwar example of truly threatening urban gangs are the notorious Ninja that terrorize residents of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique (Sommers 2001b, 364–65).

Sometimes there are benefits to urban life beyond simply enduring. For many youth in Bongoland, for example, success may simply mean the ability to "survive," to stay afloat in an urban world teeming with competition and danger. Returning to a rural home from Dar es Salaam without shillings in one's pocket is practically unthinkable, because it would signal a failure to succeed in the city. Urban migration, for male youth in Tanzania and elsewhere, appears to have become a kind of rite of passage into manhood. Cities are a challenge that must be surmounted, regardless of the cost. Urban migration is a risky challenge, and Last's analysis of youth lives in Kano, Nigeria, suggests a sort of risk taking similar to what the actions of youth in Dar es Salaam demonstrated. In Kano, "older youths go on to do the jobs that are seen to be the more risky ones," he observes. In addition, "it is youths . . . who travel to distant places to work and see the world; indeed it is expected of them" (Last 1991, 10).

CONCLUSION: INCLUDING URBAN YOUTH

How does one balance the potential for African cities to promote cosmopolitanism while protecting oneself against threats emerging from youth alienation? To be sure, such a balancing act is not going to be easy. However, it is useful to note that inclusion is implied in the idea of urban cosmopolitanism, while alienation is a product of feeling excluded. What follows are some thoughts on improving youth employment opportunities and attempts to include the alienated in civil society.[10]

Programs for youth in crisis, including urban youth, tend to receive inadequate support, reach relatively few youth, and are poorly evaluated (Sommers 2001c). Those who evaluate programs, for example, need to look at individuals who do not participate, not just at the ones who do. The low level of evaluation data creates a significant knowledge gap, because it is not usually clear what sorts of programs work for urban youth and why they succeed.

The existing data from the youth-at-risk programming being undertaken both within and outside Africa, however, suggest that holistic pro-

gram approaches have a chance to address the array of concerns and problems that confront the lives of urban youth (Lowicki 2000; Sommers 2001c). The lives of urban youth are often so unstable, and their needs are so great, that youth employment programming alone may yield only minimal success. The introduction of literacy and basic life skills may also be required, particularly given the severe impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa's young. Accordingly, health education modules may be needed to address the dangers of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Adapting life skills curricula also promises to reduce the vulnerability of youth to at-risk behavior. Addressing the trauma in young lives, particularly among the war-affected, also promises to be important.

It is useful to examine, learn from, and form networks with urban youth programs that have demonstrated success in reaching marginalized young people. Research on migrant and refugee youth in Dar es Salaam (Sommers 2001a, 2001b) illuminates how Pentecostal churches have been effective at reaching poor urban youth. Their program is emphatically holistic; in addition to the spiritual benefits, joining a Pentecostal congregation can give a young person a generally supportive community and opportunities for gaining access to employment training and work networks involving successful Pentecostal businesspeople.

A Pentecostal youth may be viewed through hostile eyes on the streets, but church services provide an array of opportunities to be seen as a contributor to the greater good of the community. A "saved" youth has a new identity, is accepted by fellow congregants, and is not an outcast. Following the strict Pentecostal code of behavior can be challenging, and Pentecostal leaders interviewed in Tanzania tended to depict Dar es Salaam as a place swarming with Satan's temptations. But for those who join and accept Pentecostalism, the rewards can be quite significant. For many, Pentecostalism has represented a road to urban success, which is proven when youth return to their rural homes (or refugee camps) with shillings in their pockets and gifts in their bags.[11]

Small or narrowly targeted programs hold the potential for inadvertently promoting exclusion by exacerbating already existing feelings of alienation and marginalization among youth. This can apply to programs such as those for ex-combatants and street children and youth. For example, those youth who may have resisted joining a gang, army, or militia, who have been victims of such armed groups, or who have been child

soldiers not included in ex-combatant programs (e.g., underestimating the involvement of girls and female youth in soldiering appears to be widespread), can create the feeling that programmers are paying attention only to the most prominent militarized youngsters.

Prioritizing effective assessments and monitoring and evaluation exercises appears to be critical. Participatory methods that directly engage and inquire about youth and their lives, backgrounds, and aspirations can help develop trust between programmers and target-group members and can promote learning about youth lives and aspirations. Such information can become especially important when programs attempt to configure job-skills training and business-skills programs that adequately address youth needs.

Many youth are effectively small entrepreneurs in the informal sector. In many cases, they have made a market assessment and identified a niche where they might have a chance to succeed. Even though this sort of economic life tends to be disconnected from the state, Macharia (1994, 168) observes that, "despite the lack of state support for the informal sector in most African countries, the sector has its own ways of keeping dynamic." The informal sector's resilience can be so great that support systems arising from "social networks, kinship, ethnic [networks] and friendship" may keep an informal sector economy "thriving, [even] when the state system [is] harassing it" (p. 168).

In addition to job-skills programming that may include microenterprise business-skills training, training about specific vocations, apprenticeships and mentoring, the primary support that some youth may require is improving their access to capital. Unfortunately, microcredit programs for urban youth in Africa appear to be rare. If such programming were made available to young urban entrepreneurs, it would have the added benefit of also constituting an expression of trust in them, a critical concern for young people who are alienated from mainstream society. Another expression of trust can be employed with programming that features computers and educational approaches that incorporate Internet use (e.g., Internet-based coursework or information research). Many urban youth interested in joining a program may be particularly curious about learning how to access and employ computers and the Internet as a learning and training tool.

How to successfully reach female youth is a persistent and particularly thorny youth-programming challenge. It is more common to find male youth associated with the term "youth" than female youth, who may sim-

ply be considered "young women." A related problem arises when female youth are married—are they still youth, or are they mainly young mothers? Youth programmers, accordingly, must advocate for the effective and equitable involvement of female youth. That urban male youth tend to live much more public lives than urban female youth makes the programming challenge even more difficult.

The need to advocate for and work to include female youth is all the more important during and after wars, when many young females fall victim to war atrocities. Nordstrom (1999, 65), for example, has commented on the tendency to overlook the needs of girls and female youth during war. "The forceful conscription of boy children into militaries is now a popular academic and documentary theme," she writes, "while the contemporary slaving of girl war orphans is given little attention." Accordingly, there is a critical need to "lift the veil of silence that surrounds the treatment of girls in war" (p. 75). Part of this process is for youth programmers to work hard to find and then include female youth and effectively address their needs, customizing a program to suit their time frames and other limitations, and addressing their human-rights, mental, and reproductive-health needs.

Marginalized urban youth tend to be unpopular with other members of urban society, including government officials, in Africa and elsewhere. They may not be viewed as vibrant, dynamic contributors to a city's culture and daily life, being perceived instead as carriers of disease and crime. Though some urban youth may indeed be criminals or ill with HIV/AIDS or another disease, it is also true that limited institutional efforts are usually made either to understand and accept urban youth or view them as a kind of untapped cultural and labor resource. Programming that is customized to the needs and concerns of male and female youth in cities has the potential to help turn the tide against youth isolation and marginalization and to foster a greater understanding of their outlook and potential.

The most important youth to include in programs, finally, are likely the hardest to reach. Effective programming requires outreach, time, flexibility, networking, evaluation, support—and patience. Ultimately, what is needed is to accept Tupac Shakur's challenge—to transform the "All Eyez on Me" slogan from one describing youth who attract attention as defiant outcasts to one describing youth who are becoming accepted contributors to Africa's urban economies, cultures, and civil societies.

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NOTES

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3. E.g., Ankerl (1986) estimated that Dar es Salaam's population would increase by 1,239 percent between 1970 and 2000.

4. See, e.g., Sommers (2001a, 2001b) for more information on these issues.

5. Long-standing under investment in rural Africa has also been noted elsewhere. E.g., two decades ago, O'Connor (1983, 15) commented that "in terms of development . . . it is declared government policy almost everywhere [in Africa] that priority attention should be given to rural areas, even if such policies are often less evident in

practice. . . . Most academic observers share this view, as increasingly do outside advisers such as those in the aid agencies."

6. Rwanda's was reported as 6.1 percent of the total population in 1999, Bhutan's was 6.9 percent, and Burundi's was 8.7 percent (UNDP 2001, 156–57).

7. Information on migrant and refugee youth in Dar es Salaam is detailed in Sommers 2001a and 2001b.

8. An excellent example of urban residents avoiding census takers is detailed by Briggs (1993), in his analysis of the 1988 census in Dar es Salaam.

9. Taken from private interviews with Sierra Leonean refugees in the Gambia, 2000. They were present in Freetown during Operation No Living Thing.

10. A broader discussion of programming options for youth in crisis situations is to be found in Sommers (2001c).

11. The attractions and benefits of Pentecostalism for poor people, and youth in particular, has been widely described, e.g., by Cox (1995), Kalu (1997), and Martin (1990).

LINKING YOUTH TO EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES

A United Nations Priority: Youth Employment and Its Implications for the Youth Population Explosion in the Developing World's Cities

STEVEN K. MILLER
United Nations Secretary-General's
Youth Employment Network

More than 1 billion people today are between 15 and 25 years of age, and nearly 40 percent of the world's population is below the age of 20. Eighty-five percent of these young people live in developing countries, where many are especially vulnerable to extreme poverty. At the same time, the rate of urbanization is by far the highest in developing countries, and by 2015 it is expected that developing countries will account for more than 75 percent of the world's urban population.

The International Labor Office estimates that about 74 million young women and men are unemployed throughout the world, accounting for 41 percent of all the 180 million unemployed persons globally.[1] Many more young people are working long hours for low pay, struggling to eke out a living in the informal economy. There are an estimated 59 million young people between 15 and 17 years of age who are engaged in hazardous forms of work.[2] Young people actively seeking to participate in the world of work are two to three times more likely than older generations to find themselves unemployed. The U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his report to the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, writes that demography is not destiny, and that "if I had one wish for the new millennium, it would be that we treat this challenge as an opportunity for all, not a lottery in which most of us will lose."

The U.N. Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network

In September 2000, the largest gathering ever of heads of state and governments met at the United Nations in New York for the Millennium Summit. During this summit, as part of the Millennium Declaration, they resolved to "develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work."[3] In preparation for this meeting, Annan issued a report titled *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-First Century* (Annan 2000). Here, the secretary-general first proposed his Youth Employment Network:

> Together with the heads of the World Bank and the International Labor Organization, I am convening a high-level policy network on youth employment drawing on the most creative leaders in private industry, civil society and economic policy to explore imaginative approaches to this difficult challenge. I will ask this policy network to propose a set of recommendations that I can convey to world leaders within a year. The possible sources of solutions will include the Internet and the informal sector, especially the contribution that small enterprises can make to employment generation.[4]

The 12-member panel of the Youth Employment Network met for the first time in July 2001 at International Labor Organization (ILO) headquarters in Geneva chaired by Annan, together with Juan Somavia, the ILO director-general, and James Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank.[5] At this meeting, Annan emphasized the need for both immediate action and long-term commitment to achieving the millennium goal on youth employment. He also invited the panel to continue working with him in an advisory capacity on an ongoing basis. Finally, he asked the ILO to take the lead in organizing the future work of the Youth Employment Network and to assume the responsibility for hosting a permanent secretariat.

Recommendations of the Youth Employment Network

Following this first meeting, the U.N. secretary-general's High-Level Panel on Youth Employment developed a set of policy recommendations

that they transmitted to the U.N. General Assembly, which discussed them in November 2001 in the overall framework of following up on the Millennium Summit. [6]

The panel's recommendations encourage world leaders to take personal responsibility for translating the commitments taken at the Millennium Summit into action through *a specific political process*.

A U.N. Political Process on Youth Employment

In the panel's recommendations, heads of state and governments are first invited to develop national action plans on youth employment with targets for the creation of jobs and for the reduction of unemployment. Preparing these action plans should be based on critical reviews of past national policies. Furthermore, governments are invited to volunteer to be champions of this process, to take the lead in preparing their action plans and in showing the way to others.

In developing their plans, governments are encouraged to closely involve young people. It is also recommended that governments integrate their actions for youth employment into comprehensive employment policies. Employment policy is seen not as a sectoral policy among others; rather, it is the successful mobilization of all public policies.

Following up on the Youth Employment Network's work, the U.N. General Assembly has recently adopted a Resolution on Promoting Youth Employment, cosponsored by 106 U.N. member states.[7] This resolution demonstrates the strength of international consensus and commitment around the Millennium Goal of "decent and productive work for young people"—and around the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network as the means of action for meeting this commitment. This resolution, as was recommended by the high–level panel, encourages member states to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and to involve youth organizations and young people. It also invites, within the context of the Youth Employment Network, the ILO, in collaboration with the U.N. Secretariat, the World Bank, and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support governments and to undertake a global analysis and evaluation of progress made.

It is useful here to draw out a few implications and conclusions from this political process. First, youth employment provides an entry point into broader and more complex employment policy issues. Youth

employment is an issue on which political consensus can be easily developed. Therefore, developing solid strategies for youth employment provides a first step for political leaders and policymakers in addressing tougher issues of creating employment for all groups within society where there may be difficult trade-offs to face.

Second, the political commitment of governments provides an umbrella and a space for action for a variety of nongovernmental actors, including employers, trade unions, and organizations of young people. Therefore, the political process of preparing national action plans is not an objective in itself but rather a means to encourage public–private partnerships in developing concrete action for youth employment.

Youth Are An Asset, Not a Problem

The panel's policy recommendations begin by presenting youth as an asset, not as a problem. This is an important political message, particularly in view of the relationship among civil conflict and unrest, crime, HIV/AIDS, and even terrorism. Given the growing concern with the problems that confront young people and to which they are especially vulnerable, it is important to focus on unemployment—and not on youth—as the problem. An article that appeared in the *New York Times* "Week in Review" section in the months following September 11, 2001, quotes figures from the U.S. Census Bureau:

> From Casablanca to Kabul, the statistics are stunning. Well over half the populations of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq are under 25 years old. . . . In Pakistan, the number is 61 percent; in Afghanistan, 62 percent. The boom in young people coming of age in a broad swath of territory where terrorists recruit might seem to pose one of the United States' most daunting national security threats.[8]

However, rather than focusing on young people as potential terrorists or threats, the U.N. secretary-general's panel chooses to focus on the positive and creative potential of young people: "Young people are an asset in building a better world today, not a problem. In the next 10 years 1.2 billion young women and men will enter into the working age population, the best educated and trained generation of young people ever, a great

potential for economic and social development."

Also, the panel presents youth as a creative force today—and not only tomorrow. In other words, it avoids speaking of young people as "tomorrow's" leaders, but rather as today's partners: "Young people are now asking that their voices be heard, that issues affecting them be addressed and that their roles be recognized. Rather than being viewed as a target group for which employment must be found, they want to be accepted as partners for development, helping to chart a common course and shaping the future for everyone."

THE FOUR "E"S

The panel's recommendations can be summarized in four principles:

- Employability: Invest in education and vocational training for young people, and improve the impact of those investments.
- Equal Opportunities: Give young women the same opportunities as young men.
- Entrepreneurship: Make it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young women and men.
- Employment Creation: Place employment creation at the center of macroeconomic policy.

Although the panel was concerned with delivering a technically anchored message, first and foremost, it wanted to deliver a political message—a simple, understandable message formulated to influence policymakers.

This paper touches on each of these four principles and analyzes their implications for countries at various levels of development. First, *employability*. The panel calls for breaking the vicious circle of poor education and training, poor jobs, and poverty. All countries need to review, rethink, and reorient their education, vocational training, and labor market policies to facilitate the school-to-work transition and to give young people—particularly those who are disadvantaged because of disabilities or who face discrimination because of race, religion, or ethnicity—a head start in working life. Each country is invited to set objectives and targets based on best practices or best performance for investment in education

and training and other employability-strengthening measures, leading to jobs and social justice for the young.

Employability of Educated Youth

Here it is useful to discuss the implications for employability in developing countries. Typically, in industrial countries, one associates high levels of education with low levels of youth unemployment. However, there is an apparent anomaly in many developing countries where high levels of formal education, particularly secondary and higher education, may be associated with high levels of unemployment—as well as with high levels of frustration among these unemployed youth. Educated youth in developing countries tend to come from better-off sections of the population and have correspondingly high levels of expectations.

Policymakers working on youth employment may find inspiration in the increasing body of research linking economics and psychology. It would be unwise to develop economic policies for youth employment without integrating the psychological elements of young people's expectations, aspirations, and frustrations. Policymakers should be ready to at least partially take into account these factors, rather than single-mindedly expecting youth to adapt to the realities of the labor market.

An International Labor Office report states that in many developing countries, "only the better educated can afford to be unemployed."[9] In most of the industrial countries that make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, there appears a strong correlation between education, employment, and decent work. But in most developing countries, unemployment rates for the more educated exceed those of the least educated. Therefore, the challenge is to better utilize the precious resource of the growing numbers of educated young people in the developing world—a resource that is being wasted at great costs to the young people and to society at large. And the other side of the same coin is the challenge of upgrading the employment opportunities of those without adequate education and training, who work in dead-end jobs in the informal economy.

Employability in the Informal Economy

As much as youth employment is a concern of all countries at all levels of development, it is particularly a concern in developing countries, where

the vast majority of youth live and work. In most developing countries, which lack public and institutionalized forms of social protection, the only safety nets for the unemployed are those of the family and informal networks. Low-income young people, first, do not have access to the same educational opportunities, and second, cannot afford to forgo immediate income-earning opportunities to invest in education. Therefore, a vast majority of young people in the developing world turn to employment in the informal economy to eke out a living.

The challenge for young people working in this sector thus is not so much to make them employable but rather to upgrade the productivity, incomes, and levels of social protection of the informal employment on which they depend. Here the key is not to create new jobs in the informal sector but rather to improve the quality of those jobs that already exist. Education and training policies and delivery systems must be adapted to those who work in this growing informal economy. This paper addresses how cities can work to promote youth employment in the urban informal economy.

As for the educated—and frustrated—young people in developing countries, the trick is not just to reorient public education and training policies away from expectations of employment in the public sector but also to implement public policies that stimulate employment growth in the private sector. For many developing countries, this means policies that create a vibrant, employment-intensive, and productivity-enhancing domestic private sector.

The word "employability" has often been criticized for implying that if job seekers are unemployed, it is their own fault. However, the panel's recommendations on employability combine both the responsibility of the individual with that of society. The individual is responsible for taking initiative and seeking out new opportunities. However, society is responsible for providing these opportunities and an environment in which discrimination is not allowed to become an obstacle.

Therefore, the message of employability is a message not just of individual responsibility, but also of social justice, of the right of young people to education and training that will lead them to what the ILO director-general calls "decent work:" employment in which race, religion, ethnicity, or disabilities do not get in the way of employment. This recommendation thus takes a stand in favor of the high road to employment, the type of

employment that requires a young person to be well educated and endowed with skills relevant to the labor market. Employability is also closely linked to information and communications technologies, to making these more widely available and accessible, and to closing the digital divide.

With regard to the second principle, equal opportunities for young women and men, the panel provides two sets of arguments to underpin its recommendation. One is based on a moral imperative, and the other as a means to boost productivity. The recommendation reads: Eliminating the gender gap in educational, training, and job opportunities is not only a moral imperative, but furthermore, a means to increase productivity and quality of employment. In many countries, where boys and girls have equal access to education, girls are doing better than boys are in school. In many countries, girls are not getting the same education opportunities as boys are, with serious gender gaps in literacy as a consequence. The panel argues that all countries need to review, rethink, and reorient their policies to ensure that there are equal opportunities for young women when they enter the workforce and throughout their working lives. Each country should set objectives and targets to rectify the gender disparities in access to education, training, and labor markets, and develop and implement the necessary gender-sensitive policies in these areas.

As mentioned above, there is much concern with the social consequences of youth unemployment. The need to seriously address youth employment is taking on a new urgency in light of the deteriorating security situation throughout the world. However, worries about the destructive behavior of young people can result in a policy bias in favor of young men as opposed to young women. Young men with little to lose may adopt behavior that is destructive to society, whereas young women in a similar situation tend to instead become destructive to themselves. By focusing explicitly on the equality of opportunities, policymakers can correct such a bias.

The third principle, entrepreneurship, is not just about self-employment and helping young people start their own business. It is also not just about encouraging the private sector to create employment. Certainly, these are key pieces of the puzzle. But in calling for strengthened entrepreneurship, the panel is calling for a renewed sense of initiative for all young people, whether they are workers or employers, and whether they work in the private or public sector.

Hernando de Soto, one of the panel members, makes a strong plea to review the many cumbersome regulations that keep poor people from starting their own businesses. All countries need to review, rethink, and reorient the legal and institutional framework to make it easier to start and run a business. Governments and international organizations should make it a top priority to obtain reliable and relevant data on the informal economy and on the rules and procedures required to set up and operate a new business within a legal framework. On the basis of a better understanding of institutional obstacles, policies should be developed to allow this part of the economic system to be integrated into the mainstream economy and raise its productivity through legal facilitation. This review should be combined with respect for labor standards, which should be seen as a basic element in achieving productivity and prosperity.

Governments, on both national and local levels, need to encourage a broad and dynamic concept of entrepreneurship to stimulate both personal initiative and initiatives in a variety of organizations that include, but reach beyond, the private sector: small and large enterprises, social entrepreneurs, cooperatives, the public sector, the trade union movement, and youth organizations. Countries also need to strengthen policies and programs, so that small enterprises can flourish and create decent work within an enabling environment. Each country should set objectives and targets for a broad reform program based on best practices, a process that can offer more flexibility for enterprises and more security for workers.

With regard to the fourth principle, employment creation, a cross-country analysis of youth employment carried out by the ILO in 1997 concluded that general macroeconomic conditions have an overwhelming importance in determining the level of youth employment.[10] However, youth unemployment is more sensitive than adult unemployment is to changes in aggregate demand. This is one of the reasons why, overall, youth unemployment rates tend to be two to three times higher than the rate of adult unemployment. One of the many reasons that youth are disproportionately affected by changes in macroeconomic conditions is related to levels of acquired training. For firms, the opportunity costs of firing young people is lower than those associated with firing older workers, because youth represent lower levels of acquired skills and human capital.

Although youth are hurt more than adults by economic downturns, macroeconomic policies, which stimulate aggregate demand, also carry the potential of benefiting youth disproportionately. In fact, the fourth principle of employment creation underpins all the others, namely employability, equal opportunities, and entrepreneurship. For example, employability requires not just appropriate skills and training but also public policies that lead to new employment opportunities where these skills can be used. Investing in youth requires not just better skilled youth but also a commitment by public- and private-sector partners alike to keep job creation a central concern of their investment strategies. Equality of opportunities implies following a high road toward employment, linking rights and labor standards, leading to increased opportunities for both women and men. And entrepreneurship should be supported not only through structural measures but also through growth-oriented macroeconomic policies so that enterprises can sustain themselves.

WHAT CITIES CAN DO TO CREATE JOBS FOR YOUTH[11]

City governments are on the front line in the battle to create and protect jobs. They are the first to feel the negative impact of unemployment, but they are often inadequately prepared to develop policies and programs to create jobs. The question is how to empower the prime victim of urban unemployment to provide some solutions to the problem.

In the above context, cities have a comparative advantage in four areas in the quest to create employment. These are the regulatory environment, the informal economy, investment policies, and the ability to create local alliances.

The Regulatory Environment

The first area of comparative advantage, the regulatory environment, covers a wide range of policies and programs and includes zoning regulations, regulations governing the establishment of small- and medium-sized enterprises, regulations on public contracts and tendering procedures, and regulations linked to the application of working conditions and labor standards. All of these regulations have major implications for either encouraging or holding back the growth of the informal economy. By screening and even designing such regulations to facilitate job creation,

cities are able not to create economic growth but rather to create a propensity for economic growth to result in more and better jobs. City governments are also able to change the ways they contract out for goods and services in order to favor local employment and those using more labor-intensive methods to deliver these goods and services.

The Informal Economy

The regulatory environment is particularly important for improving employment prospects for the majority of youth working in the second area of comparative advantage, the informal economy. City governments can also work to improve quality of employment, productivity, and social protection in the urban informal economy, from both the supply and demand sides. From the supply side, and in addition to the provision of basic infrastructure as discussed above, support can be given through training and microfinance, and by helping informal-sector workers and enterprises to get organized and create their own representative associations. From the demand side, more careful analysis is required on how to stimulate demand for the goods and services produced by the informal sector.

At the ILO's 2002 International Labor Conference, the informal economy was a subject for discussion.[12] Twenty years ago, when the ILO first discussed this issue, there was a sentiment that the informal sector was a transitory phenomenon that would gradually disappear as development took place. However, at present, not only is employment in the informal economy on the rise but furthermore, through international subcontracting and outsourcing arrangements, the boundaries between the formal and informal economies are becoming increasingly blurred.

Therefore, a strategy to upgrade youth employment in the informal economy needs to be carefully designed to exploit positive linkages and to discourage negative linkages between the two economies. Increasingly, subcontracting and outsourcing are utilized as a means to sidestep fundamental labor standards. To the contrary, increasing attention should be paid to bring informal-sector enterprises under the protection of fundamental principles and rights at work. This requires a combination of strong and enabling public policies to avoid a situation in which vulnerable small enterprises, including home-based workers and other forms of self-employment, are forced into a race to the bottom to ensure their access to wider markets.

Investment Policies

The third, closely related area where cities have a comparative advantage for job creation concerns investment policies. Infrastructure investments present an enormous opportunity to create new sources of employment for young people in developing countries, especially those in an urban setting where the needs for slum upgrading and infrastructure improvements are enormous.

Infrastructure investments represent a missed opportunity where the potential for employment creation is greatly underestimated and underexploited. The World Bank estimated in the *World Development Report 1994* that at that time developing countries were investing $200 billion a year into new infrastructure—4 percent of their national output and a fifth of their total investment.[13] In preparation for the U.N. International Conference on Financing for Development held in 2002, the World Bank appealed for major, immediate infrastructure investments to address the urgent needs of the poorest segments of the population facing "infrastructure poverty." However, for such infrastructure to effectively reduce poverty, greater attention needs to be paid to the employment potential of infrastructure investments.

Utilizing cost-effective, labor-intensive methods for the construction and maintenance of basic infrastructure is one way of getting employment bonuses for the young out of infrastructure investments. Small-scale basic infrastructure is usually of immediate benefit to poor people, is environmentally friendly, and most easily lends itself to labor-intensive methods. Examples of such infrastructure include agricultural feeder roads, low-income urban upgrading schemes, irrigation and water supply, soil conservation, and environmental restoration works. Also, a large proportion of the workforce in labor-intensive infrastructure development programs tends to be young people.

Experience has shown that labor-intensive public works can be implemented with timely and high-quality results. Also, such "public" works can be implemented by the private sector, and provide one opportunity for young people to start viable enterprises, in small-scale contracting, in engineering consulting, and in a variety of ancillary services.

Investment decisions are being taken increasingly by local, rather than regional or national, governments. Whereas direct employment creation and special public-works programs are often proposed by politicians as a

means for rapid, direct employment creation, employment-intensive investment policies can also be used to redirect already allocated resources for a stronger impact on job creation. Typically, labor-intensive construction methods are appropriate for developing countries, where wage rates for unskilled labor are low.

However, there is scope for almost all countries to create new jobs by critically examining contracting and construction methods and by adopting methods that, at the margin, are both cost-effective and labor-intensive, while at the same time providing high-quality results. Employment-intensive approaches have evolved considerably over the years away from "make-work programs" to focus on cost-effective, high-quality public works that are implemented by small construction enterprises in the private sector.

The tendency toward decentralization and devolution of responsibilities and resources is accompanied by new powers of municipalities to raise taxes and to use their proceeds at the local level. These resources and powers can be harnessed by mayors in favor of job creation. Furthermore, both public and private investments should be encouraged not only in employment-intensive infrastructure investments but also for investments in human capital, basic health, and education as one means of improving the productivity of the workforce. The problem of falling productivity of labor—which appears as one of the constraints to sustained economic growth, as well as at the root of the disquieting and in some cases entrenched problems of urban poverty—can be addressed through targeted mechanisms for investments in both infrastructure and human capital. Investments can be targeted toward poor urban neighborhoods, whether they are in decaying peripheral urban areas or in the inner cities. Therefore, employment-intensive investment policies can be harnessed to improve both productivity and living and working conditions in the urban informal sector.

Local Alliances

In their fourth area of comparative advantage, city governments have a rather unique perspective on the ability of local partnerships to create alliances in favor of job creation. One form of alliance can be that which is embodied in the ILO's own tripartite structure, between employers' and workers' organizations and governments, which all have a common interest in job creation. The notion of public–private partnerships appears

most workable at the local level. Local businesses and governments have a common interest in urban renewal of decaying or insecure neighborhoods, the private and public sectors both stand to benefit from steps taken to increase the employment content and the employment impact of new investments. Trade unions can participate in community outreach programs and in helping the informal sector get organized. Employers and the private sector likewise have an interest in restoring the business climate of decaying neighborhoods.

In summary, in terms of the regulatory framework, different modalities of contracting can be explored, including forms of community contracting. Furthermore, the regulatory environment will be addressed as it influences employment in the urban informal sector. With regard to investment decisions, the policy options open to urban authorities will be addressed, including their ability to specifically include employment as an element of their investment decisions. In this area, cost and quality issues relating to labor-intensive investments are of central concern. Finally, implementing such decisions depends largely on "ownership" of the projects by a variety of partners, including the local communities where works are undertaken, the utilized labor force, and the urban authorities, who have to take responsibility to ensure quality and maintenance.

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NOTES

1. International Labor Office (2003, 1), and Schaible and Mahadevan-Vijaya (2002, 20).

2. International Labor Office (2002, fig. 3).

3. *United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/2*, para. 20.

4. Annan (2000, 25–26).

5. The panel members are Saifuddin Abdullah, César Alierta, Ruth C. L. Cardoso, Hernando de Soto, Geeta Rao Gupta, Bill Jordan, Allan Larsson, Rick Little, Maria Livanos Cattaui, Magatte Wade, Ralph Willis, and Rosanna Wong.

6. *United Nations General Assembly, Document A/56/422.*

7. *United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Promoting Youth Employment* (A/RES/57/165).

8. Elaine Sciolino, "Radicalism: Is the Devil in the Demography?" *New York Times*, December 9, 2001, Section 4, Page 1, Column 1.

9. International Labor Office (1999, 7).

10. O'Higgins (1997).

11. Lim and Miller, 1996.

12. International Labor Office, 2002a.

13. World Bank (1994, 1).

Building a Bridge for the Road Too Far: Policy Analysis for the School-to-Work Transition in Latin America

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There are many faces of youth unemployment in the Latin America region—yet predominantly, these faces are of low-income, female, and unskilled or uneducated youth. Half the countries in the region have experienced severe and persistent increases in youth unemployment during the past decade; low-income youth bear the burden of unemployment in all of the region's countries.

These bleak findings come amid significant progress in education and economic growth—tendencies that have the opposite effect on youth unemployment. The Latin American experience challenges traditional assumptions about youth labor markets. Simply put, youth in the region are not so predictable. The uncertainty and risk of the daily existence of youth strongly influence their decisions regarding school, work, and home, creating conditions of constant change and movement. Most at risk in this process are low-income and uneducated youth, who experience much uncertainty in their daily home and work existence. These labor market trends and school-to-work patterns largely dictate the priority and design of youth policies and programs in the region.

This policy paper examines the dynamics of the youth labor market. *The school-to-work transition is its point of departure* and provides the context for explaining the nature, scope, and range of youth unemployment and underemployment in Latin America. Youth unemployment is not a transitory state to employment; rather, it is a very lengthy process whereby youth move from unemployment, schooling, unpaid unemployment, and low-wage unskilled employment—all of which have low opportunity costs. This journey from school to work is particularly onerous for low-

income and female youth. The persistence of youth unemployment amongst the poor clearly dictates specific policies and programs.

This paper examines the long and winding road for Latin American youth in entering the labor market, and in so doing, it discovers significant country differences that in turn must be accounted for in planning and implementing youth programs. Of particular concern is clearly distinguishing between the general policies and programs that affect the larger youth and adult labor markets and those that are particularly targeted to those that bear the burden of youth unemployment—low-income, female, and unskilled youth.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION

The characteristics of youth unemployment have been carefully examined during the past decade, offering a snapshot of the Latin American region's youth labor force. These trends allow us to examine the severity of youth unemployment, the relative persistence of this unemployment over time, both throughout the past decade and within the school-to-work transition of youth, and to target specific groups of youth most burdened by the lengthy school-to-work transition.[1] There are 11 main characteristics of youth unemployment—key factors that are fundamental in shaping policies and programs in the region's countries. Let us look briefly at each of them.

First, there is persistently high and increasing youth unemployment in several countries. The persistence and severity of youth unemployment varies significantly by country. Argentina, Panama, and Uruguay consistently had youth unemployment rates of more than 20 percent during the 1990s (figure 1). Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay experienced rates of youth unemployment that crept upward throughout the 1990s. In contrast, several countries experienced improvement in youth employment. Most notably, Bolivia experienced a large decrease in youth unemployment during the 1990s. Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, and Honduras witnessed smaller gains, with youth unemployment rates nudging downward by 2–5 percentage points. The relevance of these rates largely reflects the overall participation of youth in the labor market.

**Figure 1. Youth Unemployment Rates
by Country for Selected Years (percent)**

Legend: 1990/1991 1997/1998
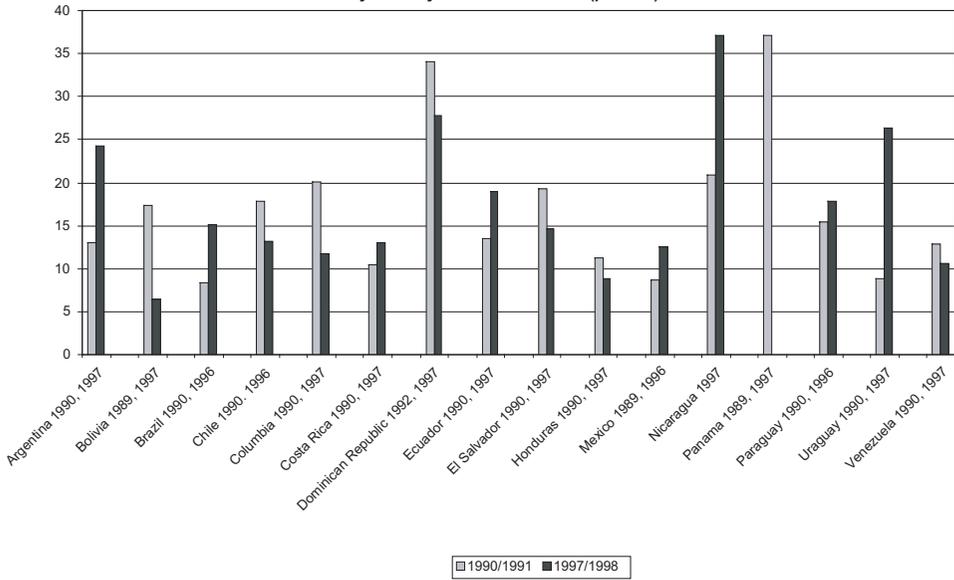
Second, there is declining labor force participation rates among youth in many countries. During the early and middle 1990s, youth were pushed into the labor market at all-time record highs, but these growth rates are now declining. Since 1995, all countries in the region, with the exception of Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela, have experienced a declining rate of youth labor force participation. Alongside this fact is the decline of youth as a percentage of the economically active population in many of the countries. Female youth labor market participation rates are also slowing in many countries, such as Argentina, Colombia, and Panama. Other countries are experiencing a new surge of female youth workers, such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay.

Third, the youth share of total unemployment is falling. The share of unemployed youth in total unemployment has declined, largely due to the decline of youth in the working population. The net impact of these two effects on the unemployment rate is mixed: Argentina, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay have witnessed youth unemployment rates as a smaller share of their total unemployment rates. The remaining countries—Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El

Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela—are finding an increasing net impact of youth unemployment in their economies.

Fourth, the rate of youth unemployment is about twice that of the total unemployed population. This ratio is high when compared with other developing countries (1.5 on average) and with industrial countries (1.8). Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay all have ratios higher than 2.0; such a number signals an extremely high ratio of youth unemployment to total unemployment (see appendix table A for these ratios).

Fifth, increasingly, the younger the workers, the higher the level of unemployment. In the past 10 years, youth unemployment rates have become more sensitive to the age of the youth. This finding is particularly pronounced in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. In many of these countries, unemployment rates of youth age 15–19 years is double that of young people age 20–24, who in turn have significantly higher rates of unemployment compared with workers above the age of 24. Gender effects further accentuate this trend in many countries (figure 2).

Sixth, female youth unemployment rates are sharply higher than male rates in a number of countries. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Venezuela all witness greater rates of female than of male

Figure 2. Youth Unemployment Rates by Gender and Age, Select Years (percent)

Males, 15-19 ☐ Males, 20-24 ☐ Females, 15-19 ☐ Females, 20-24
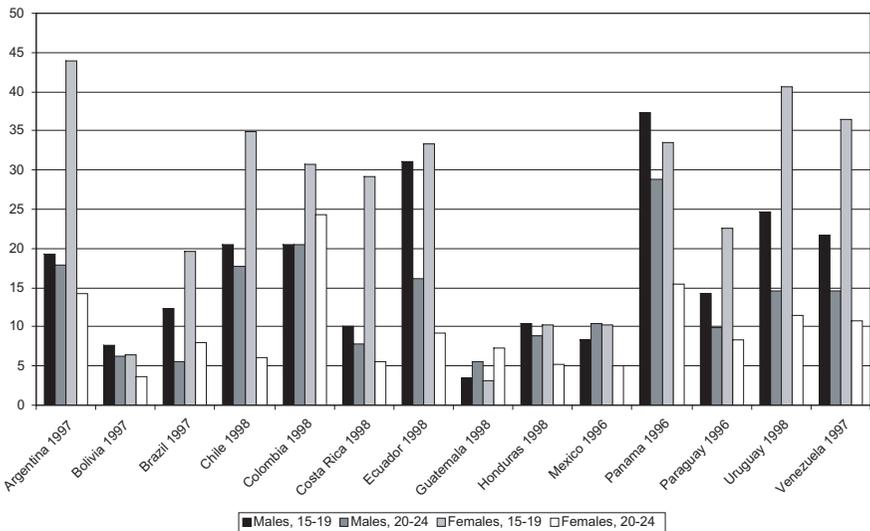
unemployment. This trend, however, is not the norm in other countries, such as Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Paraguay. Various reasons explain these country differences, including *maquila* employment, lower labor market participation rates, and domestic service employment (figure 2).

Seventh, there is a preponderance of youth urban employment in commerce and the service sectors—the informal sector. Approximately 60 percent of all employed youth are in commerce and services, with the country exceptions being Honduras (48 percent) and Bolivia (52 percent). Youth employment in the manufacturing sector has declined in many countries, with the exceptions being Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Mexico.

Eighth, the educational level of youth is rising slightly in most Latin American countries. The average number of years of schooling of youth has increased by several educational measures. The average years of schooling of the youth labor force are slightly higher for most countries. Educational achievement mirrors this finding. Overall, Latin American countries have made significant progress with basic education, and they now face the educational challenge of "competitive workforces" with the requirement for complete secondary education.

Ninth, the lower the educational levels, the higher the relative rates of youth unemployment within a country. Educational level on youth unemployment remained a key characteristic during the 1990s. A sad and simple fact emerges: The lower the educational level of youth, the higher the relative level of unemployment. The most extreme case of this trend is Brazil, where more than 90 percent of unemployed youth have from zero to 3 years of school. Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela demonstrate the power of education and employment—there, 50 percent of all unemployed youth have 3 or fewer years of school (figure 3). A second perspective relates to unemployment among the most educated youth. In Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, the highly educated only represent about 10 percent of the total youth unemployed. In these countries, the lucky few that make it to a university find a path to job security and employment. Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Panama appear to place less of a premium on educational credentials, for in those countries highly educated youth represent about 40 percent (or higher) of total unemployed youth.

**Figure 3. Educational Profile of Unemployed Youth,
Age 15-25 years with 0-3 years of schooling (percent)**
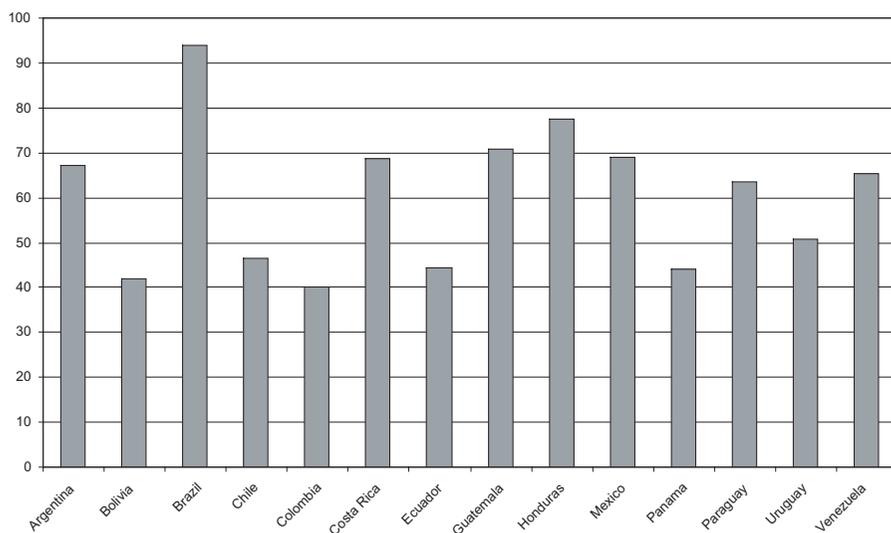
Tenth, low-income youth increasingly bear the burden of youth unemployment in Latin America. The past 10 years have witnessed a sharp increase in the unemployment rates of low-income youth in Latin America. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Uruguay all have experienced growth in unemployment for low-income youth. Of the 12 countries measured, only Bolivia, Honduras, and Venezuela counter this trend. In only a couple of the countries, this trend is correlated with higher youth participation rates—Argentina, Colombia, and Ecuador.

Eleventh, the school-to-work transition stretches out from age 15 years to past age 24. It is made up of many job searches, whereby the average turnover rate of youth in a job is at little more than 1 year and is highly variable, depending on the productive sector of activity. The traditional measurement of job search suggests that the duration of job searches is reasonably short in Latin America, with the largest number of unemployed youths (35–43 percent of the total) being unemployed for a 1–6 month period. Few youth are unemployed for more than 12 months.[2] However, this measurement does not capture the larger and more complex dynamics of the school-to-work transition (box 1). Youth unemployment and school-to-work transition is made up of multiple job searches. The job turnover and multiple activities

Box 1. Mapping Mexican Youth in the School-to-Work Transition

The National Urban Employment Survey in Mexico (NUES) and the Micro Enterprises Survey (MES) are two labor market surveys measuring the work, education, age, and real wages of urban workers in Mexico. From these surveys, specific time periods can be constructed, which trace new entrants and workers through various points in time. Six panels were constructed using the NUES and MES data. These rich data sources have become a benchmark for understanding how all workers move in the labor market throughout Mexico, as well as for studying young and unemployed workers.

   The labor market path was measured as the probability that students, the unemployed, and all workers would move from an initial sector to a final sector. For those in school, the probability of remaining is school is 53 percent; yet for those who leave school, there is a wide dispersion of the final sector of labor market activity. Of those school leavers, there is a high probability of leaving school and finding formal-sector work—about 26 percent. Yet further research shows that the higher the education of the worker, the higher the probability of formal-sector employment and of staying in the formal sector. The number of workers whose initial position is outside school but who then return to school is quite surprising. Unpaid workers have a 12 percent probability of returning to school sector the final quarter.

Source: Maloney (1998).

of the work-and-school move make the single measure of job search inadequate to capture this lengthy and complex school–to-work transition. Youth have many possibilities: (1) move into a job search and actively look for a job; (2) receive an unpaid job, such as an apprenticeship or informal learning experience in a firm; (3) accept an offer for salaried employment; or (4) remain in the household, assisting a family member or taking care of children without remuneration.[3]

   Throughout Latin America, there is a lack of dynamic panel data at the country level to explain this school-to-work transition. To help us build a composite picture of the transition process, specific age cohort data can be constructed from the household income surveys of the country. Figure 4 calculates the average unemployment rates for three age cohorts: 15–19 years, 20–24, and an adult cohort of 25–54. At first glance, these comparisons seem to confirm the expected: The longer the school-to-work transition, the lower the unemployment rates. All countries saw a decrease in

**Figure 4. Comparison of Youth Unemployment Rates among Age 15-19 and 20-24 Years and
Adult Unemployment Rates, Selected Countries 1997-1998
(percent)**

Ages 15-19   Ages 20-24   Adults, Ages 25-54
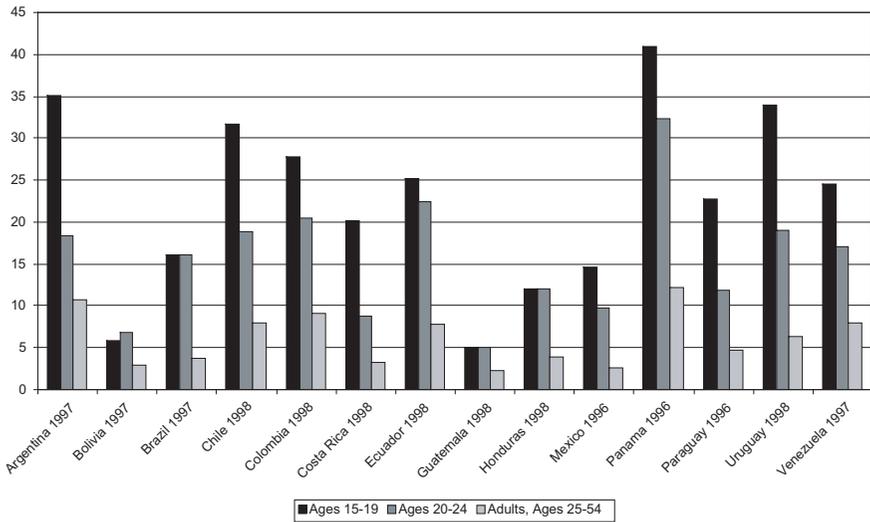
the absolute youth unemployment rates for the age cohort group 20–24, from the high levels of youth age 15–19.[4] The older youth have lower unemployment rates than the younger group in absolute terms.

The relative comparisons between older youth and adult cohort groups bring several surprises. The older "youth" group (*jovenes adultos*) has an extremely high rate of unemployment both in absolute and relative terms, compared with the adult working population. Eleven out of the 13 countries (all but Argentina and Venezuela) have youth unemployment rates for older youth more than double those of adult unemployment rates (see appendix table B for specific country rates by age cohort).

The pervasiveness and significance of youth unemployment—well into their 20s—points to a one key finding: The school–to–work transition is a long process, lasting well into adulthood for Latin American workers. Second, the lengthy school–to–work transition process is not exclusive to countries with high levels of education. Controlling for the absolute level of unemployment for the age 20–24 cohort group, the countries with high levels of older youth unemployment compared with adult rates are Mexico, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, and Paraguay. The level of education may be a factor in lengthening the school–to–work transi-

tion, but it is one among several issues, including gender and income. These two other factors will be considered more carefully in the next section on policy and program analysis.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Most policy discussions in Latin America rest on the assumption that "if only" the economy grows at 8 percent, generating the natural rate of employment in a country, it will thus resolve unemployment in the country. The magical target whereby economic growth generates sufficient employment has long been the goal of country policies throughout Latin America. In so doing, it is assumed that the economic market will generate a growth-employment solution, "if only." Alongside this argument, classical economists point to institutional barriers—high payroll taxes and minimum wages—as the reasons that the market will not clear.

These arguments contrast with a second perspective: that for any number of reasons, the demand market will find it impossible to create the structure of jobs to resolve unemployment, particularly that of youth unemployment. The large degree of uncertainty and risk in the labor markets of Latin America creates uncertainty regarding a household's future employment and expected wage; the highly volatile nature of demand fluctuations and its effects on real wages; high job turnover and poaching of employees; and the large and significant constraints in financing your education or your self-employment. To a considerable extent, uncertainty breeds labor market structures that are inefficient and short term in nature, never moving countries to higher development levels (Booth and Snower 1996).

These two perspectives on labor markets largely frame specific policies and programs (box 2). Flexible wage and workforce policies address the market barriers and thus encourage employment. Training programs, labor market services, and self-employment programs are aimed at reducing the uncertainty in the market and increasing skills matching in the market. The purpose of this section is to explore the policies and programs that emerge from these two perspectives and specific issues related to low-income Latin American youth. In so doing, one must acknowledge the trade-offs between specific policies and programs, which largely arise from their primary and secondary effects.

Box 2. Evaluating Labor Market Programs: The Youth Perspective

Youth in Latin America have been at the forefront of labor market innovations, particularly in small, foundation-sponsored youth projects. Through a series of small projects highly targeted to low-income youth, new small projects have been implemented to address youth unemployment issues. In a recent conference, youth from the Southern Cone countries met to discuss the lessons learned from these projects. Here are some of their comments:

- Create a microcontext that relates to the specific needs of youth.
- Find highly targeted local solutions.
- Beware of multiple objectives, because the project may not achieve none of them.
- Implement flexibly through monitoring.
- The world of work is the world of adults. Give youth security, protection, understanding, information, and contacts in this world.
- Youth need to be part of the policy debate.

One vehicle for including youth in the planning and execution of labor market programs is to create a specific youth policy in a country, as has been the case in Colombia.

Sources: O'Higgins (2001); CEPAL and UNESCO (2001).

Low-income youth, with their large informal-sector presence and lengthy and inefficient school-to-work process, present challenges for overall economic goals and impact. With this in mind, let us turn to the main objectives of labor market policies and programs. Four broad types of labor market policies and programs will be examined, with particular analysis of low-income youth:[5] employment-investment-growth policies and programs, government public works and social investment programs, efforts to promote employment through wage and job security policies, and the promotion of employability through skills matching and training.

Employment–Investment–Growth Policies and Programs

Generating jobs through aggregate economic demand is a traditional assumption of economic development. The 1980s presented a classic picture—the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) for the Latin American region of 3–5 percent generated a decline in unemployment of about 2–3

Figure 5. Comparison of Unemployment Rate by Income for Age 20-24 Years, Selected Countries (percent)

■ Poorest youth   □ Middle income youth
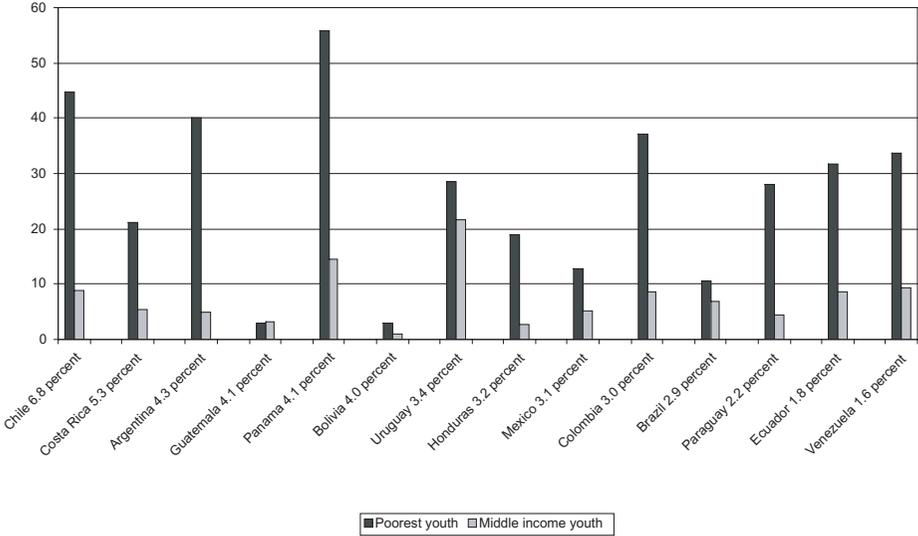
percent.[6] The 1990s introduced a new dynamic—whereby GDP growth of about 4 percent for the region was accompanied by increasing levels of unemployment, particularly for some income, age, and gender groups. This disturbing trend of growth combined with higher unemployment had specific effects on the age and gender structure of unemployment.

Chile, the region's top-performing economy, finds itself in an enviable position in economic growth and investment—with annual average growth of 6.8 percent during the period 1990–2000. Unfortunately, these policies have not translated into youth employment for all. About 60 percent of the poorest Chilean youth, age 15–19 years, cannot find employment; this compares with middle-class youth rates of 14.7 percent. Similarly, Costa Rica, a country that outperformed many in Latin America during the past decade with an annual average GDP growth of 5.3 percent, also experiences enormous gaps in youth unemployment for the poorest people compared with the middle class. The poorest youth, age 20–24, have unemployment rates about 300 percent higher than those of middle-income youth in the same age cohort. Figure 5 presents this dynamic of poverty and youth unemployment for the older age cohort group, youth age 20–24.

In the distribution of unemployment, poor youth face more barriers to entry than average middle-income youth, and these barriers increase during the school-to-work transition period.[7] This relative statistic is extremely significant. Low-income youth age 20–24 years have an extremely high rate of unemployment compared with middle-income youth. One would expect that the older age cohort, age 20–24, would have fewer barriers to entry in the labor market, given that unskilled youth would eventually gather work experience and specific human capital. Just the opposite happens in most of the countries: Low-income youth age 20–24 have extremely high rates of unemployment compared with middle-income youth. In Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela, poor youth age 20–24 experience unemployment rates 300 percent and greater than those of middle-class youth in the same age cohort. These statistics are truly shocking in both the magnitude and the number of countries.

The greatest gap between poor and middle-income youth is in the high-growth countries of Chile and Costa Rica, and in the low-growth countries of Ecuador and Paraguay. Both groups of countries are experiencing extreme "cohort" crowding as low-income youth look for employment.[8] Different factors drive these results. For Chile and Costa Rica, the demand for unskilled labor relative to skilled labor has diminished, so uneducated, poor youth find it increasingly difficult to find employment. The new economies of Chile and Costa Rica have little demand for poor, unskilled, and uneducated workers. In contrast, Honduras and Paraguay are experiencing high rates of urbanization, with an increasing share of youth in the working population; youth employment is greater than 25 percent of the total working population. The crowding effects of demographic forces thus have been exacerbated by the sluggish growth of these economies during the past decade. Exceptions exist; Bolivia, Brazil, and Guatemala have a smaller unemployment gap between income levels, as well as significantly lower rates of absolute youth unemployment.

To summarize, two findings emerge from this analysis. First, countries experiencing high economic growth and increases in aggregate labor demand may well reduce unemployment for middle- and higher-income youth. As part of this process, *the increase in the demand for skilled youths actually leads to a substitution effect from unskilled to skilled youth*. The unem-

ployment gap between poor and middle-income youth increases over time in countries with a changing labor demand profile.

Second, *the longer the school-to-work transition and the higher the levels of absolute youth unemployment rates, the greater the unemployment gap between poor and middle-income youth*. With these results, it is important to remember that any policy or program to reduce overall youth unemployment in the region's countries should have an indirect impact on poor youth, for the time of school-to-work transition and age cohort crowding would decrease.

However, there is little evidence that high-growth economic strategies reduce absolute unemployment rates for low-income youth. Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica provide little evidence that low-income youth benefit from high-growth job creation. Youth unemployment is at extremely high levels in these countries, and the school-to-work transition is extremely long due to educational and income factors. The countries with the lowest youth unemployment rates are those that focus on creating unskilled jobs through labor-intensive manufacturing, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, and Mexico.

What do these trends suggest about growth-employment policies for youth unemployment? In short, growth-employment policies may well reduce youth unemployment for middle- to higher-income youth. Such policies may promote human capital investment, skills matching, and a whole host of objectives to achieve economic growth. Yet *economic growth policies do little to address the persistent and structural barriers of youth unemployment that must be addressed at the lower levels of income, skills, and education.* Essentially, the structure of youth unemployment in Latin America includes predominantly low-income, female, and unskilled youth. Policies and programs must target these populations to be effective. Let us now examine various policies and programs that effectively target these beneficiaries.

Government Public Works and Social Investment Programs

Employment creation programs are the most widely adopted government intervention to support cyclical unemployment throughout Latin America. There are enormous types and variations of job creation programs. Almost every country in the region has adopted some type of direct employment creation program to respond to economic downturn.

The massive employment creation program adopted by Chile in the early 1970s to the 1980 extended benefits to 4–19 percent of the labor force and represented 1.4 percent of GDP. From Mexico to Argentina, temporary direct employment program have been the most familiar and politically favored government response to cyclical and transitory unemployment. The programs are targeted to unskilled workers, primarily in the informal and construction sectors. Youth in Latin America are *unintended* beneficiaries of these programs, often representing about 30–40 percent of the targeted beneficiaries.

Throughout most of these employment generation programs, there has been very little attention to the youth populations. The unintended beneficiaries are not targeted in terms of specific age, skills, training, or other labor market services. Only in

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Box 3. The Life Center Model: SERVOL in Trinidad and Tobago

Following the 1970 riots in Port of Spain, Service Volunteered for All (SERVOL), was established to provide social services to Trinidadian poor people. During the next 11 years, SERVOL developed the important new concept of the Life Center, with departments that included day care units for both babies and toddlers; a skills training center for more than 200 young men and women between the ages of 17 and 19 years; and dental and medical clinics. The Life Center program was formulated to engage adolescents in a unique mix of courses comprising personal development and awareness, education and training, acquisition of parenting skills, and on-the-job experience.

With its community-based preschools and its Life Center programs in place, SERVOL decided to concentrate on two age groups: those 5 and below and 16–19 years of age. From 1982 to 1986, there was an expansion into the Caribbean of the SERVOL approach. Now SERVOL is working to train teachers and set up early childhood and adolescent programs in close cooperation with 15 governments across the Caribbean. In 1990, SERVOL's teacher-training courses were given accreditation by the University of Oxford.

The Trinidadian government went into partnership with SERVOL in 1986, and within seven years, 5,000 children age 3–5 were being taught in 149 preschools, while 45 Life Centers were training 3,750 adolescents. SERVOL's own staff numbered more than 100, and more than 3,000 local people were involved in the management of "their" centers in their own communities. Including parents, some 50,000 people are involved with SERVOL at any one time.

Source: SERVOL; see www.servol.org.

the more recent social investment funds is a small percentage of the fund targeted to training beneficiaries, yet these projects still have little emphasis on youth unemployment. This area needs to be reexamined.

Targeting jobs and services to youth by specific age, education, and gender characteristics is the key in revising these project designs. Combining highly targeted jobs to low-income youth and gradually building a community-based program of general skills training and labor market services has been a successful model for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the region. Such a project focuses on fast disbursement for the jobs creation—the carrot to attract the youth—and builds on this opportunity to offer a long-range program of community services, including health care, education, and job training. Such a program is not oriented toward short-term countercyclical objectives but rather toward building on long-term social delivery capacity. Integrating job creation programs with community service programs moves these projects from *short-term transitory benefits to long-term institutional development* (box 3).

Promoting Employment through Wage and Job Security Policies

Minimum wages in most Latin American countries are no longer binding, in that informal wages are below the minimum wage.[9] The lack of an effective minimum wage policy has serious consequences in terms of the value of the job attachment and the opportunity cost of leaving work activity. There are several key considerations related to policy and program design. During most of the school-to-work transition, youth have an extremely low opportunity cost in moving from one job to another. More particularly, during the first stage of this school-to-work transition, many youth choose to stay out of school for unpaid work or search unemployment, as is borne out by the Mexico panel data (Maloney 1998). The high dropout rate from primary and secondary schools and the revolving door nature of work for youth must be carefully considered when designing policies and programs for youth, particularly low-income youth.

One policy example is *training wages for youth.* Many countries in the region have adopted a lower subminimum wage, either as a countrywide policy or within a specific training program. Most of these wages do not distinguish the age, gender, or income bracket of the individual. Yet there are enormous differences in the opportunity cost, particularly for low-income or younger participants. As we have seen from the data, the low opportunity

cost of youth during school-to-work transition has little to do with a sub-minimum wage—most youth age 15–19 years receive an extremely low sub-minimum wage or nothing at all. At the older level, youth age 10–24, most training wages would be relevant for formal-sector jobs.

In short, these training wages, not targeted to the specific opportunity costs of participating youth, either completely overcompensate the youth or, as in most cases, limit the youth that participate in programs to those that are educated and skilled. Policies and programs with training wages attract older, skilled youth workers, with the unintended consequence of excluding low-income, unskilled youth. *It is recommended that specific programs targeted to low-income youth reflect the workforce and household realities of the target population. Stipends should pay for travel and miscellaneous costs that reflect the opportunity cost for youth, and a small flat fee stipend for businesses* (box 4).

Promoting Employability through Skills Matching and Training

Unemployment is often explained as the skills mismatch between the demand and supply of labor. Policies and programs only need to close the skills gap so that workers will be more productive and more employable. There is no doubt that a skills gap exists in Latin America, yet the impact of skills training to close this gap is much more difficult to assess. There are a myriad of training policies and programs to support skills acquisition—informal education and training, technical education and training, self-employment, and workplace education.

Best known throughout Latin America is Chile Joven, which also has been adapted and modified in Argentina (Proyecto Joven) and Uruguay (Opcion Joven). These youth training programs offer short-term training and in-firm subsidized employment for 6 to 12 months. Through a system of contracting out training services, training is offered to more than 100,000 young people in the Southern Cone countries. Similar projects have been designed throughout Latin America. Various program interventions include training and work experience in firms, work training to become self-employed, training for young workers, and a short-term apprenticeship program. Experimental design evaluation has been conducted on these various programs, whereby control groups have been set up to evaluate outcomes.

In the cases of Chile Joven and Opcion Joven in Uruguay, statistical surveys and analyses allow for comparable results.[10] Table 1 outlines the

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Box 4. The Impact of Job Security Policy on Youth Unemployment

In the past 5 years, a large body of country research has been created on the costs of job security policy throughout Latin America. To better explain the results of this research, Heckman and Pages (2000) link the various countries to cross-panel estimates of the impact of job security on employment, including that of youth unemployment. Confirming the earlier results of Montenegro and Pages (1999), youth bear the burden of job security in the formal sector. Yet which youth are most influenced by this policy? Formal-sector employment is primarily biased toward highly educated youth, whereby skilled and educated youth have been substituted for unskilled and lower-income youth, particularly among older youth workers, those age 20–24 years.

For youth in the informal sector, the impact is not clear. Research shows that a loss of job security in the formal sector results in negative employment in the informal sector—a perverse result. Perhaps this is explained by the educational profile of the youth or adults employed in the two sectors. With the increased demand for skilled workers in the formal sector, informal-sector skilled workers move back to the formal sector—resulting in minimal or negative informal-sector employment impact.

Alongside this effect is the substitution effect, whereby unskilled labor moves to the informal sector, thus reducing the probability of employment in the informal sector for unskilled workers. Any sweeping reform of the labor codes that would accelerate this process could lead to worsening job prospects for young, low-income unskilled workers. The lessons learned from past experiences include the unintended consequences of wage and labor policy in Latin America, a labor market characterized by sector and skill gaps.

Source: Heckman and Pages (2000)

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main findings of these evaluations, in employment impact, wage impact, human capital impact, and targeting. This discussion points to the wide range of project benefits, both intended and unintended. In fact, the small project in Uruguay, Opcion Joven, controls for a variety of interventions, from training to labor market service options. The evaluations highlight the three main lessons learned, which can be summarized as follows.

First, higher employability is due to training and subsidized employment. Both projects increase the probability of employment for its beneficiaries, with the greater impact measured by the Uruguay initial test. [11] The Uruguay evaluation distinguished three service options: training with stipends, training without stipends, and technical training. The Uruguayan case

Table 1. Impact Evaluation Results for Chile Joven and Opción Joven.

Project	Employment Effects	Wage and Income Effects	Human Capital Effects	Targeting
Chile Joven, Chile	Probability of employment increased by 8-13 percent. Higher probability for those trained within firm; 50 percent of trained youth found jobs after project.	n.a.	Lower the education and age, the lower the probability of labor market insertion. No measurement of "return to school."	Highly concentrated with 70 percent of participants in 18-24 age group, 63 percent from low-income house-holds; 40 percent with complete secondary education.
Opción Joven, Uruguay	Probability of employment increased by 60 percent, varying by type of intervention. Reduction of search time by 8.5 months, with strong gender impact. Quality of new employment is higher.	Increase in salary depends on type of training: 20 percent increase in salary with training and no stipends, 23 percent increase with stipends, and 18 percent with technical training (both stipends/ no stipends).	Marginal and insignificant schooling effects, where program did not contribute to school desertion, nor to returning to school. Lower levels of education, the lower education and age level.	Completely targeted to 15-24 age group; 79 percent from secondary educa-tion; 13 percent from technical education No evidence of income levels of participants.

Note: n.a. meant not available.
Sources: Blanchflower and Freeman (2001).

points to high impact in all three types of interventions. *The Uruguayan results demonstrate that positive results may not need to include financial incentives in the workplace, an expensive component of training programs.*

Second, highly targeted secondary education programs for youth of age 15–24 years may be only marginally successful. The Chile Joven project adequately targeted low-income youth, with 63 percent of youth at low-income lev-els. The Uruguay project did not evaluate this important question. The data suggest that the self-selectivity mechanism within the project—that of education and region coverage—was only marginally successful. The younger, less educated, and rural participants in the program had lower employability rates. New and more targeted designs are needed for this lower age, education, and income group.

Third, gender targeting led to a high rate of participation by females, yet its impact on females was 17–25 percent less than males. The targeting of project benefits to females was an integral part of the design of the projects, and projects had approximately 50 percent or more female participants. And though the projects did have a significant gender impact, it was less than males. All of the evaluations controlled for education and other variables affecting female participation.

Box 5. Youth Self-Employment Programs: Swimming against the Stream

Throughout the 1990s, much attention was given to the effectiveness of youth self-employment programs as a means of job creation. There are many justifications for this interest, including the high degree of employment creation in the informal sector, the learning of "entrepreneurship" through such programs; and the links of such programs to microcredit programs in various countries. Many of these programs attempted to avoid the pitfalls of earlier projects. Yet many projects did not meet their expectations—with business survival rates of about 25–30 percent.

   Such results make perfect sense when examining them in the context of the school-to-work transition. The constant turnover and change of the youth transition process makes for little incentive to stay with a business. In fact, the one activity that does not characterize the youth transition process is that of self-employment. The low opportunity costs in leaving any activity gives little incentive for self-employment. Such projects are swimming against the stream, not working with the transition process. These programs need to be evaluated, given an understanding of the transition process. How do they fit into it? What is the skill impact on participants—not the business impact? What is the employment-wage path of participants after the project?

Source: O'Higgins (2001).

These programs provide excellent examples of how to target resources to specific beneficiaries: contracting out services to NGO providers; specific standards for training services; the use of training vouchers to businesses (which is a form of training subsidy); and the inclusion of informal–sector firms in their outreach program. However, the weakest link in these programs is the inclusion of lowest–income beneficiaries in the program. Chile Joven provides a separate component oriented toward the "poorest of the poor" that needed to be redesigned within program implementation. ProJoven in Argentina faltered in its ability to reach the poorest, rural populations, given the limited number of training institutions and difficulty in attracting poor youth. The Uruguay project, though certainly oriented toward secondary education students, did not target the poorest of the poor. In fact, many administrators of these programs would agree that to target the poorest of the poor, programs must use different models, those that are more integrated with community service delivery than labor training (box 5).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above analysis points to a wide range of considerations in designing policies and programs for low-income youth. Policies and programs ultimately can bridge the school-to-work transition in Latin America. The following highlights some of the main points of this paper and recommends ways to improve policies and programs:

- The school-to-work transition—the "road too far." The lengthy school-to-work transition evokes enormous uncertainty and continuous change. Policies and programs must address all aspects of the transition, because these activities are highly interwoven in the behavior of youth. Given the length and nature of the school-to-work transition, the long-term employability and productivity of youth should be a key consideration for policies and programs rather than short-term job placement.
- There are large differences between the policies and programs to address economic growth and competitive skilled labor force issues and those that address the social inclusion aspects of low-income youth unemployment. Demand-based programs do not automatically ensure that one includes low-income participants. Most important, the lower the income level of the participant, the more difficulty in addressing his or her needs inside a large government training or jobs program.
- Targeting the specific youth audience, whether by age, gender, or income, is essential to policy and program success. The school-to-work transition is a long and winding road, where youth age 15–19 years have a very different profile from those age 20–24 years. Designs need to address these specific targets, and in many cases, completely different designs should be recommended—depending on age, income, and gender.
- With regard to community-based models for the poorest of the poor, there is little doubt that the programs to the lowest income groups, those that suffer the most from unemployment, should be integrated into community-based outreach models (see box 3 on SERVOL). These models are quite distinct from the competitive labor training models—oriented toward technical and productive skills.
- As for stay-in-school incentives, for the youngest unemployed workers, it is important to encourage them to return to the educational

Appendix A. Key Indicators of Youth Unemployment in Latin America (percent)

Country	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)		Unemployment Rate (%)		Youth to Total Unemployment Rates	Unem-ployed youth in total EAP (%)	Unemployed youth of total unemployed (%)
	Total	Youth	Total	Youth			
Argentina 1990	56	52	5.9	13.0	2.29	19.2	42.1
Argentina 1997	59	53	14.3	24.2	1.69	20.6	35
Bolivia 1989	59	41	9.4	17.4	1.85	23.1	43
Bolivia 1997	62	41	3.7	6.4	1.73	21.9	38.3
Brazil 1990	63	62	4.5	8.3	1.84	28.2	52.7
Brazil 1996	64	61	8.0	15.1	1.89	26.3	49.3
Chile 1990	52	38	9.7	17.9	2.06	19.5	40.1
Chile 1996	56	37	6.0	13.2	2.20	16.3	36.1
Columbia 1990	61	49	10.3	20.1	1.95	23.8	49.5
Columbia 1997	63	48	24.3	11.8	2.06	21.8	44.8
Costa Rica 1990	57	51	5.3	10.5	1.98	25.3	49.0
Costa Rica 1997	58	47	5.6	13.0	2.24	21.9	49.1
Dominican Republic 1992	69	56	19.7	34.1	1.13	33.8	58.6
Dominican Republic 1997	64	56	17.0	27.8	1.54	30.8	50.0
Ecuador 1990	61	44	6.1	13.5	2.21	23.8	53.0
Ecuador 1997	64	48	9.2	18.9	2.05	23.3	48.2
El Salvador 1990	64	51	9.9	19.3	1.95	26.1	51.0
El Salvador 1997	68	43	7.3	14.6	2.00	21.9	43.0
Honduras 1990	60	48	6.9	11.2	1.62	28.9	45.7
Honduras 1997	65	55	5.2	8.9	1.71	29.4	50.1
Mexico 1989	53	43	3.3	8.7	2.45	27.8	69.0
Mexico 1996	59	47	5.1	12.5	2.45	25.2	61.6
Nicaragua 1997	61	47	13.1	20.9	1.60	25.8	41.1
Panama 1989	65	47	27.0	37.1	1.37	22.7	31.2
Panama 1997	63	50	15.4	37.0	2.05	22.0	45.1
Paraguay 1990	65	59	6.3	15.5	2.46	26.6	58.6
Paraguay 1996	71	65	8.4	17.8	2.12	27.6	50.0
Uruguay 1990	58	57	24.4	8.9	2.74	19.5	53.5
Uruguay 1997	59	61	11.4	26.3	2.31	21.6	49.8
Venezuela 1990	57	41	9.6	12.8	1.85	22.9	42.5
Venezuela 1997	64	50	10.8	10.6	1.87	23.3	43.4

Source: CEPAL, 2000. *Panorama Laboral*

Appendix B. Key Indicators of School-to-Work Transition and Income Impact on Youth Unemployment, Selected Countries, 1997–98

	Measures of At-Risk Youth Unemployment by Country										
	Unemployment Rates by Age (years)					Unemployment Rates by Income Decile (Level# 1/ Level# 5) and Age					
Country	Age 15-19	Age 20-24	Age 25-54	Ratio 1: 15-19/ 20-24	Ratio 2: 20-24/ 25-54	Age 15-19 Income Level		Ratio 3: Income Levels 1/5 Age 15-19	Age 20-24		Ratio 4: Income Levels 1/5 Age 20-24
						1	5		1	5	
Argentina, 1998	35.1	18.4	10.7	1.91	1.72	47.4	16.6	2.86	40.2	4.8	8.38
Bolivia, 1997	5.8	6.8	3.0	0.85	2.27	2.7	1.7	1.59	3.0	1.1	2.73
Brazil, 1997	16.1	8.6	3.8	1.87	2.26	17.7	14.6	1.21	10.5	6.8	1.54
Chile, 1998	31.6	18.9	7.9	1.67	2.39	59.6	14.7	4.05	44.8	8.8	5.09
Colombia, 1998	27.7	20.4	9.1	1.36	2.24	50.3	8.7	5.78	37.2	8.6	4.33
Costa Rica, 1998	20.2	8.7	3.2	2.32	2.72	42.5	15.8	2.69	21.1	5.4	3.91
Ecuador, 1998	25.1	22.5	7.8	1.12	2.88	37.1	11.1	3.34	31.7	15.3	2.07
Guatemala, 1998	5.0	5.0	2.2	1.00	2.27	2.3	2.1	1.1	2.9	3.3	1.14
Honduras, 1998	12.0	9.5	3.9	1.26	2.44	22.3	3.3	6.76	18.9	2.6	7.27
Mexico, 1996	14.6	9.7	2.6	1.51	3.73	22.9	4.0	5.73	12.8	5.2	2.46
Panama, 1996	40.9	32.4	12.2	1.26	2.66	67.4	9.5	7.09	55.8	14.5	3.85
Paraguay, 1996	22.8	11.8	4.7	1.93	2.51	26.0	5.0	5.2	28.1	4.5	6.24
Uruguay, 1998	34.0	19.0	6.4	1.79	2.97	42.6	21.7	1.96	28.5	21.7	1.31
Venezuela, 1997	24.5	17.1	8.0	1.43	2.14	35.4	14.8	2.39	33.6	9.3	3.61

Source: Diez de Medina (2001).

system. As the dynamic data suggest, many youth are in a constant cycle between school and work. Extending education to "informal" programs with certification and at a community center would encourage youth to go back to school, yet without the stigma of failure associated with the formal educational system.

- Rethink expensive training programs. Considerable cost savings could be tapped when designing unemployment training programs. An emphasis on generic skills for younger participants would certainly reduce costs. Also, expensive training stipends may actually exclude low-income participants, as high-income youth crowd the programs.

- With regard to basic skills for the informal sector, for most young people in Latin America, the informal sector is the point of entry into the labor market. There is very limited understanding on how programs can tap into this experience to enhance workforce learning. Such an orientation is distinct from simple business skills. The question is "how to use this experience to encourage basic skills for the future." Remedial education emphasizing basic skills should be integrated into these training curriculums.

- Remember your objective. For many countries in the region, the main problem regarding youth unemployment is not its severity—but rather its persistence in low-income populations. Other countries are experiencing both cyclical unemployment as well as a deepening of structural unemployment. Distinct policies and programs are needed to address these different target populations: low-income youth versus middle- and higher-income participants.

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NOTES

1. The large body of survey work has been undertaken with the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC, also known by its Spanish abbreviation, CEPAL) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Regional/Lima. See *Panorama Laboral* (ILO 2000b) for annual statistics. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other multilateral institutions have worked in concert with CEPAL and ILO on these surveys and analyses.

2. The source for these data is ECLAC, on the basis of special tabulations of data from 1990–97 household surveys conducted in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, and Uruguay.

3. Maloney (1998).

4. Only Bolivia and Guatemala do not show a robust difference, which might best be explained by statistical sampling limitations.

5. For a more comprehensive analysis, see Fawcett (2002).

6. In estimating the responsiveness of unemployment to changes in GDP, the IDB Research Department found the following: Where a 1 percent change of aggregate demand leads to a change in the adult unemployment rate 0.25 percent, a GDP increase of 4 percent would generate a reduction of unemployment of about 1 percent; see Marquez and Pages (1998).

7. Absolute levels of unemployment rates decline for both poor and middle-income youth 20–24 years of age (see figure 3), yet the unemployment gap between the two income groups widens for this older youth group.

8. See Blanchflower and Freeman (2001) for a more detailed analysis of age cohort crowding.

9. Marquez and Pages (1998).

10. This review of the impact evaluations draws from: Bravo and Contreras (2000) and Bucheli and Gonzalez Rozada (1997).

11. It must be emphasized that there were stringent empirical tests—for this analysis isolates other factors—e.g., education, age, and other variables that influence the search process. These test results are very impressive, given the stringency of the tests.

RESPONSES OF THE POOR AND URBAN MIGRANTS

The Case for Street Youth: The Lost Decade

ROSEMARY MCCARNEY AND STEPHANIE SAUVÉ
Street Kids International

T he planet has become an overwhelmingly urbanized environment in the 15 years since Street Kids International was born. Estimates of the number of street youth vary, but conservative numbers from UNICEF suggest 100 million and growing. In some of the countries where Street Kids International works, they represent 30 to 40 percent of the population between 10 and 20 years of age. The numbers are not about to decrease soon. The conditions that cause children to flee to the streets are not diminishing, and the streets of the world's cities are not becoming more hospitable.

We at Street Kids International believe that street-involved youth are "missing" from the agendas of many international agencies and that this population represents a "lost decade" of development programming and investment. What we mean by this "lost decade" is that international agencies underinvest in these youth both intellectually and financially and both domestically and internationally. We who work in international agencies find street-involved youth difficult, unpredictable, and inaccessible—physically and emotionally. They do not come to our offices and ask for help. They fail to conform to our stereotypes about how children should behave and the appropriate role of adults in their lives.

Because street-involved youth are a difficult target population, we have avoided the challenges of learning how to successfully invest in them. It is easier in a relative sense to focus on the inoculations and nutritional needs of children under 5 years of age who are compliant recipients of our assistance. We have also been relatively successful in focusing attention on literacy and numeracy skill building through primary education of children ages 5 to 10 who willingly attend school when it is offered. However,

these investments are put at risk as we "drop" kids for the next decade of their transition from childhood to adulthood, until 10 years later, when they become mothers or adult heads of households in need of training and employment.

They have also been missed because the early decades of development have had a distinctly rural focus. The expertise and experience have not been developed for working in the cities, and street-involved youth are distinctly urban phenomena. In the cities, the traditional pillars upon which development programs have been anchored—extended families, intact and relatively immobile populations, homogeneous communities, adult-headed households, and land, however meager, as an asset base, are gone. Our public policies presume a stability of fixed addresses, civil identities, birth records, and traditional family units that may not exist in urban areas. To successfully serve this particular population in the world's cities, international agencies need a whole new set of skills and investments.

STREET KIDS INTERNATIONAL

Street Kids International has been consistent and for many years unique in its focus on working with street-involved youth. At Street Kids International, we believe that the ones who are difficult to access are not the youth but ourselves, our programs, and our institutions. We believe we need a paradigm shift in adult–adolescent relationships, away from experts with lists of do's and don'ts and dire warnings, and away from rescuers of children from situations that do not fit our model of what childhood should be. Despite their chronological age, street youth have been placed in adult roles and need adult forms of engagement that acknowledge their situations, coping skills, innate strengthes, and resilience. Success at working with street kids requires active, interactive, and non-judgmental engagement.

Street Kids International was born in Sudan in 1985, when the organization's future founder encountered the street youth of Khartoum, who had fled alone from the armies and militias in the countryside during the early days of that civil war and found themselves in Khartoum with no resources and no adults left in their lives. Having been struck by their stories and resilience and frustrated by the unwillingness of major donors to

take on this population, the founder shaped the early principles and practices of Street Kids International.

During the past 15 years, the organization has worked globally with street-involved youth, youth workers, and local frontline organizations that share our commitment to working creatively with these kids with a different lens—one whose point of departure is to view them as resources and assets to build on. Our evolution in thinking and practices from this point of departure, always using the street and its citizens as a learning laboratory, has governed the decisions and choices of Street Kids International organizationally over the years.

THE CONTEXT

Understanding the context for what "makes" a street kid is not simple. It is a complex set of factors, which include war, conflict, abuse, poverty, family breakdown, rebellion, and income needs, that causes youth to take to the streets. The phenomenon of street involved youth crosses borders and boundaries and is replete with myths, stigmas, and stereotypes.

Most importantly, there is no one way to adequately capture a population that spans the spectrum of street-living (homeless) youth, street-involved youth (generally not homeless in a traditional sense), and street-based working children. Some of the youth we work with are connected to a family situation and return there regularly, some have a degree of family connection that they attempt to maintain, and others have no family connection or adult support at all. Some have no institutional connection to education, and some may have a tentative or slight formal connection to an educational institution.

Even definitions by age do not adequately capture this population. We ask ourselves whether it is chronological age or behavioral expectations that may be culturally or societally derived and thus define children and youth. The youth we work with globally range from 8 to about 24 years of age, though both ends of the range beyond the second decade of youth (10 to 20 years) tend to be less precise. In fact, age is also somewhat country dependent. In the developing countries of Africa, street kids tend to be younger, which may also reflect the prevalence of HIV/AIDS orphans as well as refugees. In the transitional countries of the former Soviet Union and Central Asia, the ages we encounter are somewhat older.

Why Street Kids Are Not Yet on the Agenda

We at Street Kids International believe that though a combination of factors have prevented strategic interventions on behalf of street kids to be made by the major international players, two in particular are the most significant constraints: (1) the urban nature of the problem; and (2) the myths, stigmas, and stereotypes of adolescence itself.

Urbanization

The accelerated pace of urbanization, as a development challenge, is a relatively recent phenomenon of the past 30 years. Our expertise and the targets of official development assistance have been largely rural. As a result, the anchors with which we have successfully built best practices in development have distinct rural characteristics that are lacking in an urban setting: relatively secure land tenure versus insecure and often unpredictable tenancies in the cities; extended, stable families versus broken families with husbands or wives split or left behind in a rural setting; and a culturally and socially homogeneous population with strong traditions versus a heterogeneous, culturally diverse population without the ties of kinship and tradition.

The immediate challenge is for us to acquire the necessary understanding and awareness of urban culture and to build new pillars for urban interventions. This will require substantial investments in research and the collection of longitudinal data so that programmatic investments can be made on a solid, empirical foundation.

Adolescence

We tend to divide the first decade of life into segments: early childhood being from birth to 5 years of age, and childhood being 5 to 10 years of age. We have developed very sophisticated support interventions for these two age groups. We have also appropriately targeted the third decade of life with employment strategies, material and maternity support, and counseling mechanisms. The second decade of life, the age 10-to-20 demographic, we miss. We do not fully understand the dynamics of this age group. We tend not to be confident about how to intervene or program in a proactive, constructive way, and interventions are necessarily complicated. We know the benchmarks for birth to 5 and 5 to 10

years of age. We know what success looks and feels like for this younger age group.

For the adolescent decade, development is less linear. Working with this group requires a greater comfort with risk taking than donors are typically comfortable with. This population is less appreciative, and its needs are more expensive and time consuming to program. They do not fit into traditional and mechanical outcome measures. Furthermore, the measures we currently capture are mostly negatives: the number of youth who do not use drugs, do not engage in unprotected sex, do not engage in criminal conduct, and so on. It is difficult to measure, let alone prove, a negative.

Many say that we do invest in youth and point to the dollars spent and the campaigns and policy statements created about youth and drugs, youth and sex, and youth and violence. This reflects a poverty of vision and policy and is only an agenda for social control whose instruments currently range from prisons to schools and from criminality to social exclusion of youth.

The product of this narrow public policy approach is the dramatically increasing populations of street-involved and marginalized youth. In countries where young people find themselves in a maelstrom of rapid social and economic change and dislocation, they find themselves at the edge and are at significant risk of being drawn into extremist movements in response to the alienation and abandonment they experience.

Out-of-school, out-of-work, dislocated, and disconnected youth in volatile regions are just the kind of "lost generation" that extremist groups look to when recruiting new members. As one young Tajik shared with us during work in 1999 in Tajikistan:

> You have heard about "war-effected children," the orphans, the homeless, the refugees. Well, my friends and I are "peace-affected youth," when the civil war ended and they did not need us to fight, they forgot about us—no schools, no jobs, nothing. They will only think about us again when they want us to fight the Uzbeks or the Kyrgys or someone else we must hate.

There is a broad consensus within the youth-serving sector in many of the transitional countries that they are witnessing a disturbing convergence of two phenomena. First, the collapse of long-standing centralized

political and economic structures leaves youth age 10 to 20 years facing acute social upheaval during a life stage when personal support, social stability, and guidance from family and community are crucial.

Second, while witnessing social aberration and related risk behaviors among these youth, the institutions that serve them (both government and nongovernment) are themselves experiencing significant instability and uncertainty. Though a chronic lack of stable funding remains a constant concern, there is also a growing recognition that, in terms of government policy, professional development, and institutional capacity, the majority of youth-serving agencies lack the public policy frameworks, service-delivery models, and practical tools required to meet the needs and expectations of this new generation of young people. Little coherent vision exists on how to harness this immense demographic asset and offer meaningful and positive policy alternatives that acknowledge the energy and resilience of these young people.

Street Kids International takes the approach that adolescence is a process of building human assets. The behaviors of young people should be ranged on a normative scale that may not fit an adult view of ideal childhood and adolescence but is nevertheless within a perfectly normative frame for adolescence.

Shifting the adult–child paradigm is essential to successfully supporting this demographic age group. This requires not seeing adults as "experts," whose role is to transfer knowledge down to adolescents. It means rethinking notions of an idealized childhood that is beyond the reaches of most of the youth of the world. And it requires us to stop thinking of youth as adults in waiting.

STREET "CHOICES"

We have taken these principles and began by addressing some of the most obvious challenges faced by street kids in their reproductive health and, most important, the impact of HIV/AIDS on their lives. This was in the middle to late 1980s, long before there was any attention and little understanding of this virus. Early successes with our approaches led to being asked and supported to create a street-based approach to substance abuse directed at street youth. We captured this early work under the description of "Street Health."

In more recent years, we have closed the loop between the health risks and the economic needs of street kids by creating a business learning process specifically designed for youth who are at risk. We drew on the years of learning and best practices in microenterprise and microcredit directed at marginalized populations such as women, and we created a set of enterprise training materials reflective of the cognitive, literacy, and numeric skills of street-based working youth. It builds on the innate skills that come from street survival. We describe this area of programming as "Street Work."

Over the years, the rights of street youth ("Street Rights") have emerged as the overlying challenge to life on the street. Though we acknowledge the significance and importance of human rights treaties and legislation, in our street-based practice, we believe that the denial of the positive rights of street youth—their right to work, their right to access available health care without adult consent, their right to be free from criminal sanctions due to lack of a birth registration or other civil identity often caused by reason of being parentless from a young age— requires more attention. Working with police, local governments, and in particular municipal governments, health clinicians and youth court workers whose attitudes, biases, and perceptions can affect the day-to-day lives and rights of youth who live and or work on the streets of our cities is an important part of programming interventions on behalf of street youth.

This programmatic or content side of our work is captured descriptively as Street Choices. This is intentional and reflective of the most important part of what we do, which is how we approach our work. Our interaction with street youth is based not on a traditional pedagogy of transferring knowledge or facts but rather on opening up a dialogue on the choices they are making and how to enlarge the range of safe choices they might otherwise choose to make.

Street Practices

Street Kids International has spent 15 years developing and sharing best practices for supporting the needs of street youth. In this time, they have discovered that narrative, in particular the sharing of fictional stories, case studies, and personal anecdotes, is a strong medium for communicating

about the sensitive issues of street life. This section explores Street Kids International's working paradigm and its use of narrative as a cross-cultural tool for building collaborative relationships with street youth, the organizations that serve them, and the public that needs to hear their stories.

Changing the Paradigm

Street Kids International has always been anchored in a practice-based approach to its own organizational learning. We believe that street youth need support and opportunities to make safe and healthy life choices. They do not need prescriptive directions or dire warnings about unsafe sex, drugs, or diseases by adult "experts." Most of what we know and have learned comes from listening to street kids in nearly every country of the world.

Our pedagogical approach to working with street youth is to deliberately shift the paradigm of traditional adult–child relationships. In our work, this means neither approaching youth as an adult expert with information, knowledge, and experience to transfer, nor coming as an adult wanting to save the remnants of a childhood long gone or to recreate an adult sense of an idealized childhood. We do not start from the premise that street youth are children to be protected, liabilities to be controlled, or threats to be isolated. The use of exclusion, stigmatization, and criminality to handle the growing population of street-involved youth is a no-win proposition. We see street youth as resources and assets with unique street-derived skills and innate qualities of strength, resilience, and adaptability.

To tap into this resource means treating the street both as a place and as a metaphor. For some, it is a place of escape from family breakdown, poverty, abuse, and conflict. For many, it is a place to earn money, to support themselves or siblings. For others, it is a space to go to for nonjudgmental peer support.

The motivations—the pushes and pulls that result in lives characterized by street involvement—are many and complex. The approaches to building street-based lives are neither simple nor short term. They are about developing healthy young adults who can make safe and wise decisions.

The Use of Narrative and Stories

Street Kids International has learned, through 15 years of meeting the world's street youth, that one of the most effective ways to create a learn-

ing environment is with storytelling. Specifically, we share fictional stories (in business school language, these would be called case studies) that have street youth as the main characters.

We use these stories to create a space where lived stories can be shared safely. We have found that street youth are comfortable discussing their thoughts and experiences in reference to a "fictional" story's characters and plot that mirrors their own thoughts and experiences, without having to disclose personal information until they feel ready.

For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Street Kids International produced two animated films: *Karate Kids*, which addresses HIV/AIDS and the sex trade, and *Goldtooth*, which addresses substance abuse. Each video portrays the lives of street youth—their humor, their friendships, their abuse, and their exploitation. At first criticized for their explicit content, these videos soon became internationally recognized and honored for their capacity to facilitate dialogues with street-involved youth.

The videos were not designed to define the signs and symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases or drug addiction. Many programs and materials already provide these facts in abundance. Instead, the videos aim to act as a medium that adults and street youth can share and discuss openly. Youth workers play the videos for groups of street youth and, on a second viewing, stop the videos at various points to hear the group's thoughts on the characters and plots. This is neither a comprehension quiz, nor an interrogation; it is a time for sharing and nonjudgmental listening.

Through these dialogues, street youth have shared why the sex trade sometimes appeals to them, how drugs help them get through the night, who sells them drugs, and what they fear most and want most. Through these dialogues, street youth have the opportunity, sometimes their first, to openly contemplate the daily risks and decisions they take and to discuss safer lifestyle alternatives and choices with an adult who listens to their perspectives and respects their self-determination.

Why invest so much effort in hearing about street kids' lived experiences? In international development, the rich dialogues that lead to authentic progress occur when individuals share power and speak candidly with the aim of advancing a common cause. It is no different when the target population is youth. That is why everything we create is co-created with street youth and youth workers and then tested and re-tested in dif-

ferent geographies and settings with them, so that it mirrors the situations, conflicts, and challenges of growing up on the street.

We have learned that unlike adults, youth are less likely to divide the world by cultures and geographies when the subject is their lives. They are quick to see the common features of youth culture and street life that for them transcend differences in national culture. Materials created in Bolivia are translated by Tajiks for use with youth there. Practices had trial use in Africa are documented by Thais for use in South East Asia. The animations and materials we have produced have been translated and adapted in languages and countries all over the world without our knowledge or input or the need for our consent. At last count, *Karate Kids* had been translated into 31 languages and was being used in most countries of the world.

Stories and Education

If we give street-involved youth a voice, it only creates power where that voice is welcomed and heard. Often this does not extend beyond the street or a community center where they are able to meet with youth workers who respect them.

Street-involved youth are among today's 1.04 billion youth age 15 to 24 years (United Nations Population Fund - UNFPA). These youth will become the largest generation to enter adulthood (UNESCO) and will largely determine the global economy. In the second half of the decade of adolescence, their economic needs and potential must be addressed. In countries with the highest levels of HIV/AIDS, the percentage of youth forced to assume roles of surrogate parents and primary income earners for their families is exploding. UNICEF estimates that by 2010, an estimated 106 million children under the age of 15 years are projected to have lost one or both parents, with 25 million of this group, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa, orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. This number will continue to rise for the next two decades due to the rhythm and pacing of the disease. In these and other developing countries, youth livelihood must be a priority.

Some street-involved youth use the sex trade, drug trade, theft, and begging to make money. Many sell goods on street corners, at bus stops, and outside downtown shops. They make enough to survive, sometimes, but usually their income does not grow or enable them to improve their

quality of life. We know that a street kid with a little money can find a family. An extended family member who may not have been able to take in a child without risking putting other dependents at risk will willingly take in another member able to contribute to household income. A street youth with savings or the potential for disposable income will make choices about going to school full or part time. A street kid with a microenterprise becomes a member of a community that may have seen him as shiftless, threatening, or simply transient and not worth investing in.

How can we support these youth in building safer and more profitable ways of earning money? Street Kids International has confronted this question through the development and implementation of several microcredit and business-training programs for street-involved youth. The lessons learned from each of these regional programs culminated in the launch of our Street Business Toolkit: a global business-training program for youth workers to use with the street youth in their regions.

In all of our microcredit and business-training experiences, youth from this resilient population repeatedly demonstrated that they could adapt their street smarts and rapidly learn new business skills and use them for immediate and positive gains in their lives and livelihoods. To fully draw on this potential, we challenged ourselves, in developing the Street Business Toolkit, to identify the most effective way to advance street youth's business knowledge and understanding, despite their low literacy and numeric skills.

We knew from our time spent with street-based working children that they already had a "pricing" model in their heads. They knew when they charged too much to sell enough or too little to pay their expenses. They already had a "customer attraction and retention" model—how to win new customers and how to have repeat customers. What they lacked was a conceptual framework that fit their experiences and reflected their situations. We quickly realized that instead of starting with definitions and calculations, new business skills were most accessible to street-involved youth when introduced through a story. Much like the oral storytelling tradition, lessons stayed in their memory and prompted new ideas and questions when first introduced through anecdotes about other street youth.

Thus was born *Speed's Choice*, an animated video about five street youth encountering the challenges and adventures of running their own

small businesses. The experiences of each character have been further developed into case studies used within an extensive curriculum of inter-active activities and worksheets to guide street youth in writing a basic business plan. Each new business concept is related to a character and their story, and each story enables street youth to relate the new business con-cepts to their own experiences. The stories of youth livelihood need to be continuously captured and told and used to educate investors, such as international development agencies, youth workers, and other street-based working youth.

We believe that working with street kids in their economic capacity and providing access to credit to enable them to leverage what they already do is an entry point for other interventions such as community participation, political action, and where possible re-engagement with adults on a new footing. Building an economic base of any size invests these kids in their communities and stretches out their planning cycles and life skills beyond uninvested day-to-day survival.

Stories and Partner Collaborations

The opportunities for youth to acquire new business skills, make healthi-er life choices, and participate in microcredit extends only so far as the network of institutions and frontline workers prepare to push the frontiers of youth work from crisis intervention and rescue to human develop-ment. In many cases, the frontline workers reaching out to street-involved youth, though many experienced street life themselves, seem to have for-gotten the type of support and mutuality they sought from adults when they were young. In their professional roles, they use the authoritarian approach they experienced from their teachers and parents; they become adults who judge, warn, and forget to listen in their well-intentioned attempt to transmit information about the risks of street life.

One of Street Kids International's primary objectives is to advance methods for empowering street-involved youth through collaborations with frontline institutions and staff. We have participated in diverse dia-logues, training, and consultations with frontline staff from around the world. In all of these interchanges, it ultimately becomes clear that front-line youth workers are a product of the training they receive in schools of social work around the world. Street Kids International is attempting to change the nature and content of social work that ignores or stereotypes

street youth. The agenda of youth work still overwhelmingly tends to revolve around the themes of youth and crime, youth and drugs, and youth and sex.

In training frontline workers, we have learned that rhetorical discussions about youth-centered methodologies cannot stand alone. Youth-centered rhetoric leads to convincing discussions but little behavior change unless, in addition, youth workers share their personal stories of adult role models from their past and use these memories to explore the approach *they* will choose for engaging with youth. We do not come with ready answers or off-the-shelf training materials. In trying to revolutionize global youth work, personal commitment to the processes of youth engagement is essential and has to be modeled in the professional development of youth workers themselves.

Today, our partnership networks produce significant outcomes in their work due to their strong commitment to shared personal experience. Today, the individuals and institutions that we work with use personal experience as a starting point for cross-sharing ideas and developing new and innovative approaches for working with street-involved youth. They are transforming youth work starting from a practice-based approach that will increasingly be turned in to curriculum and teaching tools with the right support.

Stories and Communications
Street Kids International aims to demonstrate street youth's value to society and to advocate changes to the policies that threaten their rights and freedoms. We also take responsibility for witnessing and informing others about the reality lived by street youth. As long as street-involved youth do not have the public voice that they should have by right, we have the responsibility to capture their true experiences as they wish to have them known by a greater public.

We have all winced at the tired stories about street youth, written to provoke pity from donors and sympathy from media. These stories rarely complete the picture of these youth's lives. They prefer to depict only the street youth abused and abandoned instead of those who *choose* to run away, determined to make better lives for themselves. They prefer to depict street youth as shoeless and begging in the street instead of street youth who invest a small part of their profit in secondhand clothes to

appear more professional to their customers. They prefer to depict street youth who combine their daily earnings to buy drugs instead of the street youth who befriend each other to replace the family support they lack.

While it is easier to communicate a one-dimensional view of the reality we have witnessed, we underestimate the public's ability to appreciate the complexity of the true story. By portraying street youth as helpless victims instead of as valuable members of society, we continue to stigmatize them. Any story written to be provocative rather than complete reinforces the clichés and stereotypes that set back youth work and the lives of these youth by years. Taking the time to communicate accurate representations of street youth's lives builds up the authenticity and effectiveness of our work.

If we can ground our engagement of youth, our programs, our advocacy, and our communications in the sharing of stories, both lived and witnessed, with all their inherent ambiguity, complexity, and contradictions, we advance our work and our relationships on a solid foundation of what is real, challenging, and transformative. This is a more sophisticated approach to both youth work and international development. It requires a high tolerance for ambiguity on the part of donors and international agencies. Youth work cannot be successful if it is too tidy, too time bound, and too bordered.

PUTTING STREET KIDS ON THE POLICY AGENDA

It is time to put the youth population on the agendas of policymakers and national and international donors. The absolute and relative size of this population will continue to accelerate for the next 25 years. Urbanization, the demographic growth of this cohort, HIV/AIDS orphans, and the assumption of continued local and regional armed conflicts that drive youth to the relative safety of the city will demand smart, efficient responses.

Critical thinking and empirical research needs to precede investment. The simplest actions will focus on emergency responses such as shelter, food, and vocational training. It is easier to see these youth as appropriate targets for charity, protection, and rescue rather that as investment targets. We want the youth of the "lost decade" to be discovered, so they are able to receive their fair share of social and economic investment. How can this take place? We recommend these steps:

- First and foremost, we need to work toward a major shift in the attitudes and prejudices that limit potential and impoverish the vision of adolescents as strong, capable, resilient risk takers. This will require close cooperation with judges, police, court workers, health care workers, and all those others who have the most direct impact on the youth service sector.
- Good data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as case studies and well-documented pilot projects that are able to break boundaries and take risks need to be supported.
- We need to focus on institutional capacity building at the municipal government level. Though it is important to work at the micro or street level to be grounded in best practices and it is important to stay connected at the national or macro level, where treaties and large investment decisions are made, the meso level, where municipalities operate, is the axis where practitioners and policymakers can leverage influence and where major change can occur.
- We need to focus on the professional development of youth-serving agencies and youth workers. The sector needs to be professionalized by strengthening schools of social work, some of which need to build institutional experience and their reputations by centering on street youth.
- We need to use the laws of human and civil rights as a framework and press for the positive citizenship rights of street kids: their right to work, to earn a living, and to get health care.
- The effort outlined in the preceding steps will require programmatic interventions that will probably divide the decade into two halves. From children 10 to 15 years of age, the focus needs to be on their reproductive health, but it also needs to be recognized that even by this age, many of the children are working full time on the streets supporting themselves, their siblings, and their parents. Often the child pushed to the street to work is not the eldest but rather the one seen by the parents as likely to survive and succeed by reason of character and personality. For youth from 15 to 20 years of age, the focus needs to shift to strengthening capabilities around economic livelihood. At these ages, many youth are already sole income earners and heads of household. Where they are not supporting existing family members, they are beginning to form their own family units, taking on partners and becoming parents.

- This effort will require an acknowledgement that the youth service sector has many participants and is in itself a formal sector that comprises social workers, court workers, health clinicians, educators, and the police and municipal government officials, whose policies, regulatory decisions, and attitudes directly affect street kids. They need to be included in the planning and execution of programmatic initiatives in this area if we want systemic change.
- This effort will not require new microcredit institutions that only target street kids. But it will require that we influence those already experienced in the microcredit and microfinance sector to embrace this target population as viable credit recipients.
- This effort will require that we draw on the many lessons learned and the diversity of credit and entrepreneurship models that have been successful with women.
- This effort will require that we set realistic goals, standards, and benchmarks. Street kids are truly the "poorest of the poor," and in many cases there are no adult figures in their lives and no financial support. It is important that we do not set up youth or ourselves for failure. We need to think of youth work as a blended model of enterprise creation and capacity building and not insist on perfect economic efficiency in the beginning years of programming initiatives. We need "patient" capital.
- We need to think out of the box about where youth are found. For example, we need to think of refugee camps as unique urban environments that for many will be the streetscape where youth move from childhood into adulthood. We need to ensure that programming for youth takes place in all these settings, with a presumption of the street as both a physical and metaphorical place that is a permanent and formative part of their adolescence.

We believe we are on the threshold of significant learning. There are few projects in place, but there are small, creative pilots being initiated under the radar screen. We believe there is great upside potential in economic programming for street kids that is more significant than the risks, which will be there anyway. To do nothing because we are risk averse in our programming and too quick to rely on stereotypes of adolescence puts this population quickly approaching adulthood at further risk and guarantees us a new and larger generation of families that will be headed by street kids.

Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age: The Case of Homeless Street Children

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H omeless street children are an extremely disadvantaged sector of urban youth. Their particular circumstances and characteristics leave them without access to many of their human rights and excluded from mainstream society. Policies that affect these children range from broadly based to targeted initiatives—and each type of initiative carries advantages and disadvantages for them. Three basic approaches can be distinguished that cut across these typologies and determine the way in which street children are viewed and treated, and which can be summarized as reactive, protective, and rights based. Each approach has distinguishable effects on the lives of homeless children, who live in the streets of towns and cities across the developing world.

This paper sets out the main implications of the various initiative and approach choices for street-living children. A broad, rights–based approach is recommended, into which targeted initiatives are integrated, facilitated, and assessed by a collaborative state–civil society partnership, as an effective combination that enables homeless street children to gain access to their basic rights and become integrated into the wider society.

STREET CHILDREN

There is no universal definition of "street children," and several interpretations are in common use, some covering smaller populations of children who live in the streets, others including the much larger sector of children who work on the streets (Thomas de Benitez 2003, 5). For the purposes of this paper, I will look exclusively at homeless street children—or street-

living children—on the grounds that a narrower focus allows for clearer discussion, and that the arguments in this paper can be developed to apply to street-working children and other children in urban street situations.

According to the definition used by the Consortium for Street Children, *"Street-living children are those who for the majority of the time sleep on the street and retain limited or no contact with their family of origin. Children who live on the streets, without any parental support, are a fraction of the total population of street-involved children. These are in their majority, "abandoning" rather than "abandoned" children, who have generally left home for the street as a result of family breakdown and violence almost invariably linked to the stresses of extreme poverty. In certain parts of the world, a larger proportion of street-living children have been orphaned by AIDS or displaced by war"* (2001, 3).

Before addressing the particular circumstances and characteristics of homeless street children, it is important to recognize that the use of "street children" as a reference term is problematic. Five powerful criticisms of the phrase are:

- "Street children" is a generic term that obscures the many differences in individual children's circumstances.
- It does not adequately represent how children see themselves.
- It is a stigmatizing label.
- It draws attention away from other children in poverty and social exclusion.
- It reflects social and political agendas more than children's reality (Panter-Brick 2002, 148).

Unfortunately, there is no widespread agreement on an alternative phrase for "street children:" "No term has yet been coined to capture both the peculiar nature of street life and its interconnection with other aspects of vulnerability" (Volpi 2002, 3). The interconnectedness of street life with other areas of vulnerability and difficulties in gaining a consensus on definitions indicates that this is a group of children who can easily fall through the cracks of policy initiatives.

"Being poor is itself a health hazard; worse, however, is being urban and poor. Much worse is being poor, urban and a child. But worst of all is being a street child in an urban environment" (de la Barra 1998, 46). Although the particular circumstances of homeless street children vary

from country to country, city to city, and child to child, there are six barriers that interact to a greater or lesser degree to keep homeless street children in extreme poverty and excluded from mainstream society.

First, homeless street children, "share the common condition of being 'out of place' in street environments, spending their lives largely outside the spheres typically considered appropriate for children, such as home, school and recreational settings" (Raffaelli and Larson 1999, 1). This "out of place" condition sets street-living children outside the usual rules and protective norms of society.

Second, street children are, "particularly vulnerable to abuses in juvenile justice systems: they are more likely to come into (actual or perceived) conflict with the law, and they are less able to defend themselves from abuse once within the system" (Consortium for Street Children 2002, 1).

Third, although street children are often found in cities where education, "is already close to universal primary schooling" (Boyden and Holden 1991, 101) and teaching is generally of higher quality than in the rural areas (Watkins 2000, 73), they have lower probabilities than most children of being able to access formal education—not least because of their mobility, lack of a birth certificate, no home address, and no adult to enroll them in school.

Fourth, homeless street children are particularly exposed to certain health risks, yet they have less access than most urban poor children to health services. Although there is little statistical evidence to show that street children are at greater risk than other poor urban children of malnutrition or poor mental health (Panter-Brick 2002, 161), in terms of engaging in drug-taking, survival sex and HIV-risk behaviour, studies overwhelmingly put street youth in the at-risk category (Scanlon et al 1998). Street children also risk death from violent trauma, accidents, suicide, and murder, although few survival statistics have been published (Raffaelli 1999, 18).

Fifth, homeless street children need to earn money or find food to survive. Their work is usually sporadic and marginal, sometimes criminal, and always in the informal market. Their marginal activities put them outside the scope of any protection service geared to ensuring that child labor is not exploitative or hazardous.

Sixth, as sporadic workers and nonadults, street children are usually unable to rent housing and are excluded from assisted housing schemes.

These circumstances often work together to form multifactor barriers that compound the difficulties homeless street children face in attempts to overcome social exclusion, vulnerability, and extreme poverty. Their marginalization by society is exacerbated by the development or deepening of behavioral patterns that help them meet their immediate survival needs but are often a source of further alienation from society; strengthened feelings of independence, lack of attention to hygiene, and aggressive behavior are just a few such patterns that can prevent children from being able to become successfully integrated into school, regular work, or family life later on. This decline toward long-term exclusion carries implications both for the children themselves and for the wider society.

POLICIES: BROADLY BASED AND TARGETED INITIATIVES

Before turning to the different sorts of approaches behind policies for homeless street children, it is important to draw attention to the ways in which broadly based and targeted policies can affect them, irrespective of the approach adopted.

Broadly Based Initiatives

Broadly based initiatives may be aimed at poverty reduction, urban children at risk, social inclusion, or guaranteeing human rights to all children. They can be international, national, or local initiatives, which set out to address specific themes of importance to a wide range of disadvantaged children.

At the international level, for example, UNICEF has focused on five broad, cross-cutting priorities for children during the period 2002–05: completion of quality primary school education, promotion of integrated early childhood development, safeguarding against disease and disability, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS, and growing up free from violence, exploitation, abuse, and discrimination—on the basis that, "this is the framework that will allow us to have the biggest impact on the lives of children and young people" (UNICEF 2002, 1). Large international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Save the Children, Oxfam, and Plan International have similarly adopted themes with humanitarian aid and development that allow them to work coherently around the world. At the national level, many countries have broadly based policies

aimed at improving the lives of poor children; improved access to health clinics, drives to improve primary school enrollment, and legislation to protect children from exploitative labor are just three common areas of policy reform. Local authority initiatives often work in tandem with these, equipping schools in poor urban communities, staffing health centers, and providing vocational training schemes.

These are vital services for the urban poor, which will no doubt improve many children's living conditions and future prospects. And it is possible that such broadly based policy initiatives give homeless street children at least intermittent access to new services, such as immunization campaigns, if they are blanket campaigns aimed at covering all children. Effective campaigns to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases or slow the spread of HIV/AIDS will affect street children directly or as part of a domino effect reducing the overall probability of infection.

Broadly based initiatives can address and reform whole social networks, and can therefore allow more scope for preventive action. For instance, effective programs to reduce domestic violence may prevent some children from taking to the streets, whereas vocational training opportunities in areas of high youth unemployment may keep other children out of street gangs and thereby prevent some of them from taking to street life.

However, broadly based initiatives run the very real risk of including street children at the levels of planning and discourse but excluding them in practice. This, in essence, is because services for urban poor children (or children in extreme poverty) are, like most services, limited by explicit resource constraints and performance targets. A typical localized example could be that of a vocational training workshop for children from low-income urban families, which may be designed with 50 places, of whom 20 "graduates" might be expected at the end of the first year.

Such a combination of place restrictions and performance criteria will create competition among the eligible children from low-income urban families. Homeless street children who are more mobile, have had less schooling, may be dirty, and are possibly aggressive may well be perceived as less inclined to arrive on time or carry out routine tasks, are often less informed, are less able or less willing to compete for the places than children who have family support, and lack a fixed place to sleep and more regular schooling habits. Even if a homeless child is offered and accepts a

place, they are likely to face more obstacles by staying in the program—such as living in an unfavorable street environment, having to make more changes to behavioral patterns, and being subject to stigmatization—than do other children.

A broadly based initiative, designed to address a specific problem faced by large numbers of poor children, will be, all other things being equal, most successful for those children who have the most support and the fewest problems in other areas. Such initiatives seem likely to be least successful for homeless street children who have very few sources of support and are engaged in a precarious day-to-day struggle for survival with a range of interacting barriers affecting different areas of their lives.

Sometimes, several areas of national social policies are cited as including street children—such as vocational training (employment), community health centers (health), and orphanages and shelter homes (justice and welfare). But within these, even in high-income countries such as Belgium, "no particular attention is given to street children nor are specific methods applied to them" (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 46). In practice, therefore, homeless children are more likely to be excluded from broadly based initiatives for children, independent of the type of underlying approach.

Targeted Initiatives

The largest and most important targeted international initiative for street children so far has undoubtedly been UNICEF's regional program in Latin America and the Caribbean, launched in 1988 for children in especially difficult circumstances, in which street children were given priority (Boyden and Holden 1991, 75). A few UNICEF offices still run targeted programs, often together with NGOs (e.g., UNICEF in Albania and in Vietnam).

UNESCO and the World Bank have also targeted street children through different policy initiatives. Through its Global Basic Education for All Program, UNESCO funded several NGO initiatives for street children and disseminated examples of good practices during the 1990s (UNESCO 1995). The World Bank has also funded projects for street children through local authorities and NGOs (e.g., a pilot program in Ceara, Brazil; World Bank 1994), launched its Street Children Initiative in 1998, hosted an international conference on street children in 2000,

and published a report on approaches and practices for street children in 2002 (Volpi 2002).

Although the global presence and wide-ranging responsibilities of international agencies and international NGOs provide them with a platform for advocating policies and disseminating good practices, they do not have the comparative advantages of specialization, innovation, and personalization needed to implement and sustain policies targeting particular groups of disadvantaged children (Thomas de Benitez 2003, 34). It is more often local authorities and sometimes national governments that develop targeted policies, often in conjunction with NGOs, and usually in reaction to growing numbers or persistent populations of working or homeless children visible on their cities' streets. Mexico and Kenya, for example, are currently implementing targeted initiatives for street children in their major cities. And local authorities in many cities across the world have started their own initiatives in response to local concerns and anxieties about homeless children on their city streets.

Targeted initiatives recognize homeless street children as a particular group of disadvantaged children who survive in particularly precarious but often highly visible conditions. Targeted initiatives can work to help homeless street children gain access to services that address specific, identified needs in health, welfare, housing, or employment. Drop-in centers, medical and dental treatment, psychological and family counseling, and access to schooling and job opportunities can all be directed at meeting the needs of homeless street children. Initiatives targeted at homeless street children can help to plug "gaps in the social networks through which children, and street children in particular, can fall" (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 47).

Several hundred small, often local NGOs around the world help plug these gaps, either in collaboration or conflict with local authorities. However, targeted initiatives are essentially reactions to perceived existing problems, and are limited in their capacity to prevent those situations from arising. Also, although a targeted initiative is more likely to have an immediate impact on homeless street children than is a broadly based initiative, this does not mean that this impact is necessarily positive or lasting for the child's integration into society.

APPROACHES TO HOMELESS STREET CHILDREN

Perspectives on street children have undergone a sea change at the turn of the 21st century (Panter-Brick 2002, 148). A driving force behind this sea change has been the almost universal ratification of the 1989 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely and rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history. Children are moving from the margins of discussions about poverty toward center stage, as UNICEF's publication *Poverty Reduction Begins with Children* suggests (UNICEF 2000). And at the same time, concern for street children and other youth in difficult circumstances is "no longer a matter of humanitarian and charitable concern, but a legal responsibility at local, national and international levels" (Panter-Brick 2002, 8).

Although only one approach, the rights-based approach, responds adequately to the legal responsibilities toward street children assumed by all governments on their ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, two other approaches are evident in practice in many countries. These can be summarized as the "reactive" and "protective" approaches.

A Reactive Approach to Homeless Street Children

A reactive approach sees homeless street children primarily as a threat or potential threat to public order and safety. A key policy manifestation is the use of the juvenile justice system as a way to clear the streets and punish offenders against the common good. A "central characteristic of the Law and Order approach is that the phenomenon is individualized and is viewed only in terms of its possible consequences for public order" (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 17).

Children in some countries, like the Philippines, can be arrested simply for living on the street, or for committing offences connected with their homeless status (Consortium for Street Children 2002, 1). "Homeless youngsters are often defined as 'vagrants' and in many countries vagrancy is a criminal offence. 'Homelessness' is often confused with delinquency and provides automatic grounds for arrest" (Boyden and Holden 1991, 71). In Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, children have been routinely arrested for homelessness or vagrancy (Satterthwaite 1999, 227). Sometimes drop-in centers are moved by the authorities to

the periphery of cities, in an attempt to get children off the streets (Satterthwaite 1999, 217).

Sentencing policies can range from those that place children in custodial institutions to alternatives such as community service. Custodial options are still in place for children in many low- and middle-income countries, such as Ecuador, Namibia, and Pakistan. Street children can be particularly vulnerable because they rarely count on family support in their journey through the court system. Where a children's rights agenda is not yet in place, or where it is only nominally in place, policies can be highly repressive toward children at any stage of the legal process.

Policies of rounding up children to frighten them away from the streets and of imprisoning "vagrants" may be symptoms of "authoritarian populism" in countries living through political chaos or economic decline, when governments draw on particular prejudices and discontents to attract support and legitimacy (Hall 1982). Underpinning such treatment is the concept of street children as delinquents. "The problem of street children is therefore often perceived solely as a criminal problem" (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 48).

Under a reactive approach, authorities are likely to give homeless street children welfare and educational provisions available in custodial institutions under punitive policies. Because a policy goal is to remove delinquents from the streets, there may be attempts at rehabilitation or at instilling fear, so that on release, children do not return to the streets. However, there is considerable evidence that after custodial sentences, homeless children return to the streets, because the problems that led to their homelessness have not been addressed (Consortium for Street Children 2002, 1).

Although unstable and authoritarian regimes are most likely to be condemned for brutal policies toward street children, it can be argued that policies harmful to street children are not limited to environments of civil war or authoritarian regimes—policies can also be implemented, in more subtle ways, within environments created by democratic conservative, corporatist, or liberal governments. Such environments may not be openly repressive in the same way as those created under authoritarian regimes, but nevertheless they can have extremely negative effects on the development of street children by keeping the barriers in place that exclude them from mainstream participation.

A broadly based initiative for children under a reactive approach is likely to help those children regarded by the authorities as "deserving" and "needy," rather than "delinquent." So homeless street children are unlikely to be affected directly. A targeted initiative under a reactive approach is likely to be repressive. Its effects may include the presence of street children in custodial institutions, unchecked abuses of children's rights, homeless children being periodically less visible as they avoid the police, and homeless children becoming increasingly alienated from society.

Another manifestation of a reactive approach will be civil society organizations, particularly NGOs, in conflict with the state. A current case is Casa Alianza's legal challenge to the government of Honduras for serious and numerous human rights abuses against street children (Casa Alianza, www.casa-alianza.org). To stress the point made above, any government, whether national or local, that adopts a reactive approach toward street children does so in contravention of its obligations assumed under the Convention on Children's Rights.

A Protective or "Needs-Based" Approach to Homeless Street Children

A protective or "needs-based" approach to homeless street children sees children as both "incomplete" and as our future—needing different treatment from adults; protecting them from potential social evils thus is seen as imperative. A key policy within this approach is the focus on specific "problems," including integrating children into formal education and withdrawing them from work. A central characteristic is that street children are perceived as individuals in need of extra attention to reintroduce them to the traditional socializing systems of school and home (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 16).

Under this approach, legal sanctions against homeless children are not a preferred option, because they would not be effective in helping children become integrated into mainstream society. National and local welfare policies may include offering temporary shelter or long-term residential accommodation in state orphanages or children's homes, and often there are attempts to trace families and return children to their original home environments. Shelter and protection services may be provided by NGOs, sometimes loosely coordinated by local welfare departments. Under a protective approach, children's housing by the state is usually

conceptualized as a residual welfare measure, often, although not necessarily, using inappropriate buildings, which are usually poorly equipped and understaffed.

Health care will be considered a necessity under a protective approach, although the priorities that are identified may be those of the authorities or the NGOs rather than those felt by the children themselves. There may, therefore, be more of a focus on curative rather than on preventive health, and more emphasis on physical rather than on mental health. Under a protective approach, homeless street children also may be conceptualized as a residual category in health policies, and more expensive health needs, particularly if they are not life threatening, may not be met.

Of prime importance will be overcoming legal and educational barriers to enable children to rejoin school, sometimes irrespective of the quality of the education on offer and its appropriateness to homeless children. Reintegration policies under this approach may include counseling, therapy, and vocational training as support mechanisms to enable children to reenter formal education or the job market, although child work will be discouraged.

The focus of the protective approach is on outcomes, rather than on process; on immediate causes of problems rather than on their structural causes. It may be charity driven, and seek to achieve specific goals recognized as helpful to most children in society over improving participation or otherwise empowering homeless street children (CIDA 2001).

A broadly based initiative for children under a protective approach is likely to include homeless street children, at least at the planning and discourse stages. Some may indeed reach them directly, such as blanket immunization campaigns. But unless designed to have 100 percent coverage, most initiatives—such as community clinics, more schools, and better housing for poor people—are, in practice, likely to have no direct impact on homeless street children.

A targeted initiative for street-living children under a protective approach is likely to respond to identified needs—identified either by the authorities or NGOs, or sometimes by children themselves—for health, education, vocational training, and welfare provision. It will be aimed at reinserting children into mainstream society through the use of established social structures. Its effects are likely to include the presence of street children in state and NGO residential and day programs,

fewer homeless street children visible on the streets, more homeless children with access to schooling and health care, and public education campaigns encouraging support for off-street programs for homeless children.

The ideologies behind many democratic regimes, from liberal to socialist, are likely to produce a protective approach largely because their priorities are elsewhere—primarily within the economy, on the workers and producers, rather than on children in poverty. Their priorities for children are to create adults who will contribute to the economy and nation-state. Using a protective approach, governments are likely to encourage civil society organizations to develop and work independently, under loose supervision by state social services. This reflects both state budget constraints and governmental commitment to ensuring that homeless children are adequately protected. Government and NGO relations are likely to be superficially collaborative but in constant tension, as independently funded NGOs chafe under government requirements to ensure that homeless children are "adequately" protected.

A Rights–Based Approach to Homeless Street Children

A rights-based approach sees street children as human beings whose fundamental rights have been violated. A key policy within this approach is to ensure the legal protection of children's rights, promoting the well-being of children through a range of social, economic, cultural, and educational measures that allow street children to take control over their own lives. A central characteristic of this approach is that street children are human beings who have been pushed into a weaker position with few, if any, human rights, and who have to cope with a number of additional problems specific to their situations (Council of Europe Steering Committee on Social Policy 1994, 16).

Under a rights-based approach, policies are geared to outcome and process goals that emphasize the realization of rights for all children. This approach recognizes that rights always imply obligations of the state and can only be realized with empowerment. Structural problems are addressed alongside the immediate causes of problems, and programs are more likely to be intersectoral and holistic. This approach is highly policy oriented and looks at social, economic, cultural, civil, and political contexts (CIDA 2001).

Under a rights-based approach, homeless children in breach of the law should have their special circumstances taken into account. For example, some Brazilian cities have set up screening and referral centers offering alternative options to juvenile prisons, whereas some high-income countries have schemes to mediate settlements between offenders and victims (Satterthwaite 1999, 230). In some countries, state social workers or NGOs accompany homeless children all the way through the legal process, in recognition of their particular lack of other support systems.

In juvenile justice, the human rights perspective is currently driving most reform throughout the world. "One of the most important aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the guidance it gives for youth justice systems; to make these systems compatible with this Convention usually means that significant changes are needed in laws, procedures and the make-up and attitude of authorities and institutions with responsibility for managing children in conflict with the law" (Satterthwaite 2002, 6).

Sustained access to basic health services, education, and housing is recognized as an entitlement of homeless children within a rights-based approach. "Certain governments and some local authorities have made low-cost lodgings, vouchers for hostel accommodation and advice on housing available to young people" (Boyden and Holden 1991, 71). The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that all state actions reflect the best interests of the child, couched within a framework that entitles children to participate, express their opinions, and have these opinions taken into account in policies, programs, and decisions that affect them. In this context, children may have the right to work under certain circumstances; choose whether to return to the family home or to take alternative shelter options; participate in formal or nonformal schooling; and receive health care at preventive and curative levels, according to their own perceptions of their needs.

A broadly based initiative within a human rights approach is likely to include children at planning, piloting, implementation, and feedback stages. Homeless street children will not be consulted as a particular group, but children with particularly weak access to their rights are likely to participate. Broadly based initiatives are likely to include structural reforms in educational, health, or welfare service provision—with homeless street children along with other children being encouraged to partic-

ipate in order to identify processes appropriate to achieving desirable outcomes for all.

However, because such initiatives require fundamental changes in the way state services are resourced and delivered, change will take time, and homeless street children may perceive the impact more as participants in planning than as receivers of services, at least in the short term. Participatory methods have been developed from the empirically derived participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1997) to help empower marginal populations such as street children. But if resources are constrained and the numbers of children in need are large, even widespread use of participatory techniques are unlikely to enable homeless street children to access their rights to protection and service provisions.

A targeted initiative for street-living children under a rights-based approach is similarly likely to involve homeless street children, primarily as participants in finding ways to gain access to their human rights. The main emphasis is likely to be on empowerment outcomes, using participatory strategies. Rather than aiming to reinsert children into mainstream society, a rights-based approach may seek to change the way society operates for children. NGOs may work in this context to foster social movements and forums to enable street children to voice their concerns and needs (as in Brazil, India, and Peru). The effects are likely to include the high-profile presence of street children in public events covered by the media; an increased variety of options for street children to access state services through telephone help-lines for children, temporary hostels, and wide-ranging referral systems; and public campaigns to change perceptions of homeless children from delinquents or victims to individuals in difficult circumstances in need of empowerment.

Social democratic governments, with their underlying ideological tenets of inclusion and equality, seem most likely to produce this approach, under which governments may encourage civil society organizations to contribute to policymaking, use participatory methods, and share their innovations in service delivery. Governments and NGOs are likely to collaborate in these spheres. Governments are also likely to contribute significantly to NGO service delivery costs for homeless street children. However, this approach is as yet rarely practiced, even in high-income countries, where numbers of homeless children are relatively small and social services, education, and health care are significantly bet-

ter resourced in financial and human terms than they are in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, the inconsistencies inherent in participatory methods (Kapoor 2002) mean that the quality of support received by homeless street children in empowering themselves can be very uneven and may be very superficial.

Because a children's rights perspective is being actively pursued by leading intergovernmental organizations such as UNICEF (UNICEF 2002) and by key donor governments and intergovernmental bodies, including the United Kingdom and the European Commission (DfID 2002; European Union 2000), national and local governments are finding support from the international community. And this joint action is accelerating the introduction of human rights–focused provisions for children around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A rights-based approach has been widely accepted by the international community and national governments, as well as by many organizations within civil society, as the most appropriate legal framework for healthy child development. The sections above concur with this assessment, pointing to the incompatibility of a reactive approach with reducing poverty or with enabling homeless street-living children to engage with wider society; and to the partial nature of a protective approach that is unable to adequately address the complexity of homeless children's situations. But though a rights-based approach is a more complete and appropriate conceptual framework, it has not yet been adequately operationalized to support homeless street children. This section recommends five key features of broadly based initiatives and targeted initiatives, and it suggests how they might be integrated effectively.

First, broadly based initiatives are needed as preventive strategies to help stem the flow of children onto the streets by addressing poverty and social exclusion at its roots: in early childhood. Probably the single most important aspect of effective poverty prevention and social inclusion is guaranteeing basic education and employment opportunities for girls, so that they are better abled as mothers to make their own choices, gain access to social services, and provide for a supportive family environment. In addition, Townsend and Gordon (2002) recommend as, "the single

most important step to reduce child poverty," that the legal right to state welfare payments should be introduced for families raising children—per Articles 25 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (p. 425). Improved housing for inhabitants of slum areas may also be a helpful contribution in preventing children from leaving home for the streets, although "identifying where poor households are in a city is not the same as identifying children in need" (Satterthwaite 2002, 9). There are examples of good national and local-authority low-income housing projects in many countries (Satterthwaite 2002, 14), although their effects on stemming flows of children onto the streets has not been proven.

Second, broadly based initiatives for children need to be carefully checked to ensure that homeless street children are not excluded from programs guaranteeing free access to basic health care, education, or welfare. At the local level, this means dismantling barriers, such as requirements for birth certificates, school records, and parental signatures that exclude homeless street children. It also means reviewing school curricula and school policies toward children, to make schools more welcoming places of learning for disadvantaged children such as the homeless (Volpi 2002, 24), and ensuring that campaigns to promote sexual health are appropriate and available to high-risk groups like street-living children. This type of broadly based initiative should improve children's opportunities for participation in the wider society.

Third, broadly based initiatives are not sufficient on their own to enable homeless street children to engage with society on their own terms. As was noted at the start of this paper, six barriers interact to set and keep homeless street children in extreme poverty and excluded from mainstream society. And their resulting marginalization is compounded by the development or deepening of behavioral patterns that help them meet their immediate survival needs but further alienate them from society, including strengthened feelings of independence, lack of attention to hygiene, and aggressive behavior. Although a rights-based approach emphasizes improving children's participation, this is realistic and appropriate only in a context in which children are also afforded substantial protection and service provisions along the lines set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A targeted initiative should make sure that homeless children's rights to protection and service provisions, as well as to participation, are fully met.

Targeted initiatives can enable homeless street children to resolve basic welfare concerns and to develop some emotional and cognitive competencies, so that they are empowered to access wider services and opportunities for which they are eligible in mainstream society. Targeted initiatives may also prove effective in prevention: Lane (1998, 18) describes how working with siblings of street children can be successful as part of a preventive approach, and how making the distinction between, "those who are at greatest risk of taking to street life and those who live in poverty is central to effective prevention strategies;" not all disadvantaged children take to the streets, and those who do are most likely to slip though the nets of "broadly based" community interventions (cited in Panter-Brick 2002).

The World Bank Institute explored lessons learned by leading NGO practitioners and came up with 11 "essential ingredients" for targeted programs that aim to increase street children's development opportunities: trained professionals; a focus on integration into the family, school, and labor market; reaching children where they are (in the street); individualized attention and tailor-made services; children's participation; physical and mental health care; involving the family and community; lobbying and advocacy efforts; integration of services; networking and institutional cooperation; and links into community development programs (Volpi 2002).

Fourth, NGOs have provided the bulk of targeted services for street-living children in many countries, and they are often best placed to design and deliver appropriate services within a context of full local-authority support and coordination (Thomas de Benitez 2003, 34). NGOs are often better able to innovate, experiment, and provide personalized services; whereas local authorities are better able to coordinate, carry out public education, and implement broadly based policy initiatives. For effective and efficient practice, partnerships between local authorities and NGOs should be encouraged along these lines. These partnerships should be fully linked to national broadly based initiatives to maximize their benefits for homeless street children, with national governments assuming increased responsibility for service delivery costs, encouraging feedback to inform policymaking, and fostering the spread of local partnership innovations.

Fifth, the effects of broadly based and targeted initiatives on street-living children should be assessed within these collaborative government–civil

society partnerships in reviews that are accountable to the children themselves and to wider society. Although broadly based initiatives can miss homeless street children altogether, targeted initiatives will not necessarily enable homeless children to gain access to their rights. Serious resource constraints may lead to initiatives that support street children in the planning and the discourse, but that cannot do so in practice. To ensure that services reach the children they are intended to reach, periodic assessments of homeless children's access to their established rights should be built into initiatives at local levels as well as into more broadly based policy reforms at national levels.

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Urban Myths and Street Children in Russia: Coping with Cultural and Environmental Hazards

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In the world of poverty-stricken children, there exists an overarching myth: that life in the big city is a step up from rural life; that in the city, a child is free; and that work in the city will pay for a "normal" life. At first glance, life in the city for the impoverished child seems to hold more promise than life in the countryside. After all, only in a city may poor people interact with rich people, possibly earning a salary of some kind and finding shelter in public spaces. However, life in the countryside may lead to starvation: In Russia, for example, products are frequently not delivered and salaries are not regular, with families going for months without wages. In the following pages, Russia is investigated as a country where abandoned children face problems similar to those encountered by homeless children throughout the world as well as problems unique to their society.

Poor and abandoned children find the city alluring. Russian children, for example, see Moscow as modern and technologically advanced, as a center of progress and opportunity. In fact, approximately 98 percent of the street children in Moscow are from the surrounding provinces (Ferreira-Marques 2002). It has been noted by scholars of developing countries that cities "attract migrants with their glitter and liveliness," which masks the harsh reality the poor face (Blanc 1994, 20). For just as there is this aspect of progress and advancement in cities, so too is there the side of violence, subversion, abuse, drugs, prostitution, crime, and exposure to extreme health hazards. The urban environment presents many obstacles, which are at times insurmountable for the abandoned child. These include problems of resource distribution, exploitation, dis-

ease, and from a cultural perspective, discrimination and stigmatization. In short, though on the one hand the city offers hope for the destitute, it also threatens their slow demise in sundry ways.

To date, street children and their urban environments are still rarely studied. Some of the most popular countries researched on the subject of street children and juvenile delinquency are Brazil, Kenya, India, and the Philippines. These have come to the world's attention due to their high rates of childhood poverty, abuse, and violence. However, countries in which the incidence of child abandonment and homelessness is still merely rising (albeit at staggering rates) are often ignored or merely given lip service. The problem is explained as not problematic enough in relation to the other economic or social problems a given nation faces. The fact that children help to mold the dominant culture, and that they are active participants in and creators of the urban landscape in which they live, is left ignored. The social chaos in which they survive is also shaped by their own subculture, and so a vicious cycle begins. Because the topic of youth and city culture has few supporters, the city that appears so alluring and fantastic is also home to many a child's emotional and physical death.

When homes offer little stability, or in times of family crises, or when emotional problems prevail, many teenagers both at home and abroad feel compelled to run away. In the United States, most runaway children, approximately 60 percent, have parents who abuse alcohol and/or drugs; 70 percent of runaways have used narcotics themselves; 50 percent have experienced abuse at home; and 80 percent have serious behavioral or emotional problems (Flowers 2002, 42). It can be assumed that if any of these factors is present in a home, a child is predisposed to run away. According to a recent study, "family dysfunction, parental neglect, family drug use and implications of sexual activity by the runaway are seen as strong indicators of running away by youth" (Flowers 2002, 42). These factors have reached extreme heights in many developing countries, and thus it is not surprising that the number of street children is rising at a critical rate. An abusive, unhealthy home environment, juxtaposed with the mythic promises of the urban dream, leads many children to migrate to the city streets to try there fortune or fate.

Russian cities are prime sites for the coexistence of such urban dichotomies. During the Soviet regime, urbanization involved the development of both social progress and decay. Urbanization was a trend, with

the highest rates of growth occurring in the 1950s, when migration from rural areas accounted for 60 percent of urban growth (Bushnell 1990, 229).

Throughout Russian history, the city has been depicted as perhaps the only place where one may find higher education, scientific development, better communication systems, fine art—in short, what is considered "civilization." Cultured people (*kul'turnye liudi*) are not considered to be easily found in the countryside, and many urbanites to this day will distinguish between those who have a long family tradition in the city and those whose origins may be found in rural areas. However, amid this wealth of high culture, urban growth has also fueled growth in complexity and heterogeneity, for the development of "microworlds and microsocieties," for the emergence of youth subcultures (Bushnell 1990, 229), and for the spread of non-elite groups such as homeless people and street children.

Lawlessness is one characteristic of the Russian urban landscape that affects social psychology and the formation and viability of many of Russia's subcultures. Although throughout Soviet history the official government remained deaf to the demands of the people, profiting from the disadvantaged and powerless, youth groups developed underground systems to satisfy the cultural needs of their members. As Bushnell and other scholars have documented, "there was a complex network of art exhibits, plays, poetry readings, and other unofficial but nevertheless frequent and widespread cultural performances" (Bushnell 1990, 230–31). As more information from the West came in, the curiosity of the general public grew, and various informal groups created their own means to meet the demands of the public. Corruption and bribery became an acceptable means to achieve otherwise legitimate goals censured by those in power. To this day, corruption and illegitimacy are accepted and have become the norm in Russia.

Distinguishing between necessary and criminal is often difficult, and it thus comes as no surprise that the average child—much less a desperate child trying to survive on the streets of Moscow—might not differentiate between right and wrong the same way people might in the United States. Poor children continue to flock to urban streets, for they offer "opportunities" to succeed in life through petty theft and hooliganism, opportunities that "eclipse anything the countryside could offer" (Ball 1994, 22).

This paper seeks to illuminate various myths that guide abandoned children throughout the world, particularly in Russia, to choose life on the city streets. Their decision to do so immediately makes them victims of invisible yet real threats, such as pollution and disease, to their health and well-being. A lack of adult aid for these children is only partly the result of poor economic and political systems. It is also the result of cultural issues, including a lack of understanding of the children's perspectives. This, in turn, is the result of historical cultural taboos against street children, which blind the adult world to the true potential and reality of each individual abandoned child. Next, I propose four main ingredients for a successful urban youth aid program. These ingredients are often assumed to be included in programs coordinated by nongovernmental organizations and donor agencies, but in fact are only infrequently present abroad.

THE MYTH OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Children in developing rural areas often complain of the harshness of their environment: extreme temperatures, lack of plumbing and electricity, poor access to food and other material disparities real or imagined compared with city life. Cities promise if not less severe climates (e.g., with high-rise buildings screening some of the harsher winds in the winter or emitting warmth), at least plumbing, electricity, and access to jobs. However, from an environmental perspective, the urban environment is fraught with air, water, and land pollution. In a number of Russian cities, industry persists. Households also contribute to air pollution, with environmentally unfriendly means of heating and automobile usage. Landfills and unsanitary means of garbage and waste disposal contribute to the spread of toxins in the air and water, as well as the multiplication of vermin. Approximately 84 Russian cities have air pollution 10 times in excess of the allowable concentrations (DiMarco et al. 2000).

Children, generally more active than adults, are more likely to inhale more of the polluted air relative to their body weight. Playing in the ground exposes them to polluted soil. Children working the streets are most exposed to these pollutants, since they wash with and may even drink toxic water and are surrounded by exhaust fumes and other pollutants. In Saint Petersburg, children pride themselves on not getting sick from drinking the notoriously bad water and will flaunt their immunity

by drinking it for an audience. Long-term effects remain uncertain. Children are less aware of these health hazards, and in effect are even more likely to be exposed to them (Blanc 1994, 21).

Statistics indicate that in developing urban environments, children are more likely to become ill from pollution:

> Infants and children in developing countries are several hundred times more likely to die from diarrhea, pneumonia and measles than are children in Europe or North America. . . . When they do not die, children living in such extremely polluted environments may grow up stunted and handicapped. . . . A definite increase in the incidence of cancer and allergy symptoms has also been detected in urban areas of industrialized countries, due to air pollution from industrial emissions, vehicle exhausts, tobacco smoke and chemicals from building materials combined with poor ventilation. These factors have been connected with the increase in cases of asthma in large cities (Blanc 1994, 21–22).

Pollution causes 20 percent of Russian children to be born with deformities or defects (DiMarco et al. 2000). Studies have shown an increase in respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses as being linked in part to environmental pollution. Interfax reported in March of 2001 that 70 percent of Russian young people aged 10 to 15 years old now suffer from chronic diseases.

THE MYTH OF SHELTER IN CITIES

In Russia, life in the countryside is harsh. With temperatures plummeting well below freezing in the winter, the poorly insulated shacks of many poor rural dwellers, lacking in basic amenities such as running water and electricity, seem hardly appropriate. In fact, the daily strategy to stay warm and survive in rural Russia is so tedious that the warm public train stations offer a better housing situation for many children. Because it is the Russian custom to spend summers in the countryside and winters in the city, so also do many street urchins, returning in the summer to their home villages. However, public spaces can barely suffice as shelter for the developing child, even if only seasonally.

Children are known to live below the platforms of railway stations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Besides dirt, general physical discomfort, and other obvious problems with such shelter, these children face roundups by police with teargas attacks. Other shelters of choice include pipes, parked buses, and commuter trains. Few of the children live in one of the two official shelters in Moscow. By the age of 16 or 17, many die due to sickness and malnutrition, and many simply freeze. Nonetheless, few children want to be helped by shelters. They feel they are better off without the aid of an adult. In a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, homeless children wrote:

> If you want to help us, give us money. We will dress well and go to McDonald's. At the moment they throw us out, telling us we are dirty. . . . We won't go to orphanages willingly, because there they will want to educate us and we can survive on our own, without grown-ups (Ferreira-Marques, 2002: 4).

With nowhere to turn for help, street children have lost faith in adults, and their newly found child society feels more like home, providing more security and warmth than the "home" they left.

THE MYTH OF DISEASE

Most children entering life on the streets are convinced that they will not be affected by the many diseases plaguing the country. To some extent, they may feel invincible. On another level, they do not imagine that they will take on jobs or lifestyles that would expose them to such viruses as HIV/AIDS or tuberculosis. Moreover, they have heard that hospitals are everywhere in the city, unlike in the countryside. Surely, help is always just a few blocks away.

However, urban environments in developing countries offer little help to underpaid, underfed, uneducated children, who fall victim to its allure and who are also lacking a sense of values and tradition. As rigid social control in many developing countries including Russia fluctuates, old values and norms are tested and new ones remain undeveloped. Children living on city streets have little direction, no sense of the future, and thus little to strive for besides daily needs being met. Prostitutes on the streets of

urban Russia, for example, are fully aware of the threat of HIV/AIDS and means to protect themselves, but they will, for extra pay, work without protection.

In the United States, most runaway children turn to prostitution to survive (Flowers 2002, 89). Similarly, homeless children in developing countries sell their bodies for bread and shelter. Many independently walk the streets, and others become sexual slaves. Disease is almost inevitable.

Weakened by hunger, disease, drug use, parasites, and lack of shelter, street children encounter a vicious cycle. They are pushed deeper into desperation as they are less able to fend for themselves. Many street children are victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, orphaned because their parents suffered from the virus and, because of the lack of social and medical support, find themselves poorer and weaker. According to facts published by the UNAIDS program, HIV/AIDS affects all developing countries in similar ways:

- AIDS pushes people deeper into poverty as households lose their breadwinners, livelihoods are compromised and savings are consumed by the cost of health care and funerals . . .
- Women are almost invariably left bearing even bigger burdens- as workers, caregivers, educators and mothers. At the same time, their legal, social and political status often leaves them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS . . .
- The HIV/AIDs epidemic is putting the health sector under more strain . . .
- The epidemic is reducing the overall quality of care provided. A shortage of hospital beds, for example, means that people tend to be admitted only in the latter stages of illness, which reduces their chances of recovery . . .
- The vast majority of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are in the prime of their working lives . . .
- AIDS weakens economic activity by squeezing productivity, adding cost, diverting productive resources, and depleting skills . . . (UNAIDS 2002)

The number of HIV/AIDS cases has continued to grow in Eastern Europe since the 1990s at an alarming rate. It has been called an explosion

by such scholars as the UNAIDS director, Peter Piot (Zouev 1999, 28). According to the *2002 UNAIDS Fact Sheet*, approximately 1 million people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are living with HIV/AIDS—twice the number as at the end of 1999. Of the Eastern European countries, Russia is leading the surge in HIV/AIDS cases. New cases are doubling annually. Statistics show that

> the vast majority of HIV infections are among young people—chiefly those who inject drugs. It is estimated that up to 1 percent of the population of countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States is injecting drugs, placing these people and their sexual partners at high risk of infection (UNAIDS 2002).

The data on drug use, however, does not underscore the significant rise in sexually transmitted HIV cases. More women are contracting HIV through sexual transmission and "more pregnant women are testing positive for HIV—suggesting a shift of the epidemic into the wider population" (UNAIDS 2002). Young people, especially those living outside the home, are becoming active sexually at earlier ages.

A rise in cases of sexually transmitted diseases in general has been overwhelming health services already noted for their inefficiency and chaotic states. In 1995, Russia had the highest number of reported syphilis cases seen this century (Zouev 1999, 29). The explosion has been superficially fueled by an increase in drug abuse and a lack of blood screening and prevention programs. Underlying the epidemic, however, is the unwillingness of Eastern European society to acknowledge and confront the problem.

The explosion has left no one safe. Everyone is at risk. Unsterilized needles are still common, so anyone needing a shot is vulnerable. In Romania, for example,

> in 1995 more than 90 percent of the cases were among children, most of whom, it was suspected, were infected by contaminated needles and syringes. At that time, the country had more than half of Europe's juvenile cases of HIV infection and AIDS. . . . In the Russian Federation, 277 children were registered as HIV-positive in 1995; 94 of them had AIDS. By September 1997, some 3,000 new HIV cases

in children were registered for that year, a number many health offi-
cials say reflects underreporting. In general, infection rates are under-
reported and reliable figures are hard to obtain (Zouev 1999, 28).

According to the majority of the reports analyzed for this discussion,
the estimated number of people now living with HIV in the Russian
Federation is considered four times higher than the claimed numbers
(UNAIDS 2002). What is important in the data is not only the figures but
also the phenomenon of underreporting; for it, as with so many factors
leading to the health crisis in Eastern Europe, represents the tendency to
ignore or even deny, much less act upon, social issues that in some way
clash with cultural norms.

And it is not just AIDS that is considered a social taboo. Simple pre-
ventative measures are themselves seen as an embarrassment, including
condom use and sex education courses. Other problems that remain
unaddressed include incest, rape, prostitution, and sexually transmitted
diseases. Marginalized groups, such as homosexuals, find little basis for
self-expression and inclusion in society, and they are left to their own
devices when combating the stigmatized infection. Only the Czech
Republic and Georgia have included these topics in school curricula
(Zouev 1999, 29).

Besides the HIV/AIDS crisis, tuberculosis exists as an invisible threat
to Russian street children. Once again, even with underreporting of inci-
dences, the numbers are staggering. According to one report, the country
is averaging 150,000 new cases annually (Meier 2000). The most extreme
outbreaks occur in prisons, where medicine is distributed randomly and
incompletely, creating drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis.
Unfortunately, many street children are being placed in prisons with
adults, because there is a lack of juvenile detention facilities. In fact, many
street children are simply held in prisons until they are officially placed in
shelters or orphanages. Because of the cultural taboo against certain health
issues, the Russian public remains ignorant of the crisis and of the effect it
could have on the entire population. For instance, many are convinced
that HIV/AIDS is only significant to the lives of homosexuals and drug
users.

Finally, there remains an overwhelming feeling of helplessness among
Russians. As the numbers begin to be published, Russians generally shrug

them off as yet another problem beyond their realm of influence. From the street child to the educated adult, the belief is that if you are not directly in power and rich, your voice gets lost. Children interviewed expressed a feeling of helplessness and a mother and editor explains: "I take care of my own, that is all I can do" (Olga, interview, January 2000).

This feeling of helplessness is part of a larger Russian cultural senti-ment of ambivalence, fatalism, and even victimization. At a gathering, in response to American businesspeople complaining that Russians simply do not seem to care about helping their society develop economically, Elena F., an actress from Saint Petersburg, replied: "It's not that we don't care, but when it comes to making a difference, Russians are ambivalent or fatalistic. Our approach to life is guided by the maxim of *avos'*." When asked to define the term "*avos'*," Elena said that she could only describe it by way of an example: "Russians don't worry about whether or not a cer-tain number of people will fit into an elevator, they simply step in and wait to find out." Not just Elena, but scholars of Russia since the nine-teenth century have commented on this notion of *avos'*.

Scholars have gone further to link *avos'* to a Russian sense of lacking cultural identity and have faulted Russians for taking on other nations' identities in search of their own. *Avos'* is linked to a feeling of victimiza-tion or even victimhood, as an inevitable experience of Russian life that entails the experience of *terpenie* (patience) and *stradanie* (suffering), hin-dering Russian social progress and development on the one hand, yet on the other, evoking a sense of community and, in effect, liberating the individual in times of economic and political turmoil.

Beyond the feeling of powerlessness is the aftermath of Soviet control: fear that getting involved could hurt the individual and their family. If you speak up, you get noticed, and people will try to stop you by whatever means they have. In Russia, that means the mafia may be after you, or so those interviewed insinuate.

DISPELLING THE MYTHS

In general, targeting populations through education programs before an epidemic such as HIV/AIDS takes place could be one way to prevent social and biological diseases, if the education is sensitive to its population. A few successful programs have been documented in both Brazil and

Russia. "Brazil's widely praised efforts to provide universal treatment and care, in addition to its well-planned prevention programs, are estimated to have avoided 234,000 hospitalizations in 1996–2000" (UNAIDS 2002). Such education programs are often designed by individual communities because little help is given from the outside on which to model their programs.

Relatively small endeavors of opening clinics to help victims of stigmatized health issues have proven to be effective, even in Russia. In the Saratov region, the local government helped fund one such clinic. Though initially, in 1998, only 400 people came for HIV testing, in 2002, 10,000 appeared (VOA 2002). One of only two rehabilitation centers for heroin addicts in Irkutsk boasts a 50 percent success rate (*AFP News*, December 18, 2000). The success of these programs rests on their emergence from a deep understanding of the scarcity, neglect, and discrimination that the targeted population experiences (Blanc 1994, xv).

Although developers and politicians independently may attempt to aid urban youth in distress throughout the world, they are often too removed from the youth they are trying to help. Programs have been initiated by foreigners, for example, leading to misappropriation and outright theft of funding and little contact with those the programs were designed to help in the first place. Such programs are often short lived, leading to even more disillusionment among the needy. Naive goodwill may fail and even alienate the very population it is trying to help.

Four ingredients are essential for a program to succeed. First, it must be organized by minds that understand the day-to-day lives of the subjects, their conditions, and their potential. Such individuals would understand best what the subjects experience and, further, the social and legal context. Outside officials cannot affect and interact with the local population successfully if they do not share the same experiences. It is important to be sensitive to the cultural relativity of children's lives in every country and community. Although we can confidently say that certain factors, such as domestic violence, impoverishment and familial substance abuse raise the likelihood of children ending up on the streets worldwide, other factors are culturally dependent. Whereas in the United States, the absence of one parent has been identified as a contributing factor to why teenagers run away, it has not been determined to influence a child's decision in Russia on any large scale (Flowers 2002, 47). In Russia, the

absence of a father is extremely common and is seen by many children interviewed as "normal."

Second, a successful program must offer continuity in support and indispensable services (Blanc 1994, xv). Mentorship programs and medical facilities need to persist after rehabilitation. Often, the mere presence of these programs beyond individual rehabilitation serves as a security blanket and motivates "survivors" to persist.

Third, a successful program needs to target not only the street children themselves but also the culture and community surrounding such youth for, as Blanc confirms,

> It is obvious that the existence of the child and the conditions of existence are totally dependent on what the child means to us. If a child is regarded as expendable—even if an asset—care will be inadequate. This will be reflected not only in high infant mortality rates, but also in other health, education and social indicators, such as the high incidence among children of preventable disease, high dropout rates and high institutionalization rates for juvenile offenders (Blanc 1994, xvi).

Although, on the one hand, the adult world heralds the child, idealizes her, and cherishes her in individual instances and philosophically, in most urban landscapes today, the street child does not reap the benefits of this ideal. This is reflected in the increasing numbers of abandoned, abused, and neglected street children. The conditions of life for the average street child parallel the value placed on the abandoned child.

The fourth essential ingredient for a successful program is a high rate of interaction with other programs. Too often, especially in Russia, organizations will work to improve conditions for a select group of individuals. They work independently and are isolated from other similar programs and rarely communicate with those bureaucracies concerned with children's problems. In Russia, nine different official agencies are charged with dealing with the problem of street children (these include the Education Ministry, Labor Ministry, and Interior Ministry), which leads to none of them doing so successfully. A joke one former street child brings up: "There are two ways to deal with a problem: One is to do something, and the other is to form a committee" (Weir 2002: 1).

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Agenda—Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age

Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC
Monday, February 10, 2003

9:00 am	**Welcome** Joseph S. Tulchin, Co-Chair, Comparative Urban Studies Project
9:15 am	**Linking Youth to Urban Development** Ann Van Dusen, Save the Children
9:45 pm	**Panel I: Demographic Shifts and Conflict in an Urban Age** Tarik Yousef, Georgetown University Barney Cohen, National Academy of Sciences Marc Sommers, Boston University Chair: Sharon Morris, USAID
11:45 pm	**Luncheon**
12:30 pm	**Panel II: Linking Youth to Employment Possibilities** Amina Rasul-Bernardo, Growth with Equity in Mindanao Steven Miller, Youth Employment Network Caroline Fawcett, American University Chair: Ellen Brennan-Galvin, Yale University

2:30 pm	**Coffee Break**
2:45 pm	**Panel III: The Case of Street Children**
	Rosemary McCarney, Street Kids International
	Clementine Fujimura, U.S. Naval Academy
	Sarah Thomas de Benitez, International Children's Trust
	Chair: Blair A. Ruble, Co-Chair, Comparative Urban Studies Project
4:45 pm	**Closing Remarks**
	Joseph S. Tulchin, Co-Chair, Comparative Urban Studies Project
5:00 pm	**Adjournment**